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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 2024



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection July 1, 2024



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Daily Reading for Monday, July 1st, 2024

Reading 1, Amos 2:6-10, 13-16

6 Yahweh says this: For the three crimes, the four crimes of Israel, I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have sold the upright for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals,

7 because they have crushed the heads of the weak into the dust and thrust the rights of the oppressed to one side, father and son sleeping with the same girl and thus profaning my holy name,

8 lying down beside every altar on clothes acquired as pledges, and drinking the wine of the people they have fined in the house of their god.

9 Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, he who was as tall as the cedars, as strong as the oaks; I who destroyed his fruit above ground and his roots below.

10 It was I who brought you up from Egypt and for forty years led you through the desert to take possession of the Amorite's country;

13 Very well! Like a cart overloaded with sheaves I shall crush you where you stand;

14 flight will be cut off for the swift, the strong will have no chance to exert his strength nor the warrior be able to save his life;

15 the archer will not stand his ground, the swift of foot will not escape, nor will the horseman save his life;

16 even the bravest of warriors will jettison his arms and run away, that day! -declares Yahweh!

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 50:16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23

16 But to the wicked, God says: 'What right have you to recite my statutes, to take my covenant on your lips,

17 when you detest my teaching, and thrust my words behind you?

18 'You make friends with a thief as soon as you see one, you feel at home with adulterers,

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19 your conversation is devoted to wickedness, and your tongue to inventing lies.

20 'You sit there, slandering your own brother, you malign your own mother's son.

21 You do this, and am I to say nothing? Do you think that I am really like you? I charge you, indict you to your face.

22 'Think it out, you who forget God, or I will tear you apart without hope of a rescuer.

23 Honour to me is a sacrifice of thanksgiving; to the upright I will show God's salvation.'

Gospel, Matthew 8:18-22

18 When Jesus saw the crowd all about him he gave orders to leave for the other side.

19 One of the scribes then came up and said to him, 'Master, I will follow you wherever you go.'

20 Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.'

21 Another man, one of the disciples, said to him, 'Lord, let me go and bury my father first.'

22 But Jesus said, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 1, 2024

1. Our first reading is taken from the Hebrew Prophet Amos. Amos was a shepherd, not a member of any school of prophets. He ministered during the 8th century BC. In this passage he speaks for the Lord, telling Israel, Judah and the Nations of their transgressions. They seal men as slaves. They trample on the weak. They live in sexual immorality, with both father and son using the same prostitutes. They worship pagan gods...

This Prophet warns the people there are consequences for these sins.

These transgressions are prevalent in our own time. Yes, in the Church herself, and among too many of her leaders. There are still consequences. We live in an age which seems to have forgotten the words of the Apostle Paul to the Romans "The wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:32). The proper response is repentance, reparation and returning to the Lord. That same verse from St Paul assures us "...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

2. David, the Psalmist, is also a prophetic voice. Like Amos, His prophetic words were for Israel of Old and the Israel of New, the Church. And our Psalm is an example "Remember this, you who never think of God". That is our refrain today. Then, the Psalm goes on to detail the behavior of those who "never think of God". We need to "think" of God, every day. And, if and when we do sin, repent, repair and return. The great Sacrament of Confession is there, calling us to new freedom.
3. Our Gospel text is from the 8th chapter of St. Matthew, verses 18 - 22. In the preceding verses, Jesus has come down from the Mount of the beatitudes and is demonstrating the signs of the Kingdom. He has healed a leper. He has healed the Roman centurion's servant. He heals Peters Mother-in-Law, and others who were ill and had assembled to see Him in Peters house.

Then, He is approached by a scribe who says, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go". and another disciple who says he will follow Him after he buries his father. Jesus words are clear and strong, "Follow Me and leave the dead to bury the dead"... Are we following Jesus? Have we put our call to be His Disciples FIRST, before all else? This is what He asks of us.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 2, 2024



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, July 2nd, 2024

Reading 1, Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12

1 Listen, Israelites, to this prophecy which Yahweh pronounces against you, against the whole family which I brought up from Egypt:

2 You alone have I intimately known of all the families of earth, that is why I shall punish you for all your wrong-doings.

3 Do two people travel together unless they have agreed to do so?

4 Does the lion roar in the forest if it has no prey? Does the young lion growl in his lair if it has caught nothing?

5 Does a bird fall on the ground in a net unless a trap has been set for it? Will the net spring up from the ground without catching something?

6 Does the trumpet sound in the city without the people being alarmed? Does misfortune come to a city if Yahweh has not caused it?

7 No indeed, Lord Yahweh does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

8 The lion roars: who is not afraid? Lord Yahweh has spoken: who will not prophesy?

11 I overturned you as God overturned Sodom and Gomorrah; you were like a brand snatched from the blaze and still you would not come back to me -declares Yahweh.

12 So this, Israel, is what I plan to do to you. Because I am going to do this to you, Israel, prepare to meet your God!

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 5:4-6, 6-7, 8

4 You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil, no sinner can be your guest.

5 Boasters cannot stand their ground under your gaze. You hate evil-doers,

6 liars you destroy; the violent and deceitful Yahweh detests.



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7 But, so great is your faithful love, I may come into your house, and before your holy temple bow down in reverence of you.

8 In your saving justice, Yahweh, lead me, because of those who lie in wait for me; make your way plain before me.

Gospel, Matthew 8:23-27

23 Then he got into the boat followed by his disciples.

24 Suddenly a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was asleep.

25 So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are lost!'

26 And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?' And then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 They were astounded and said, 'Whatever kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?'



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Questions for Reflection for July 2, 2024

1. Amos is one of what are called the "minor prophets" in the Hebrew Scriptures. The word minor does not speak to their importance. Rather, it speaks to the length of the Book in the Hebrew Scriptures. There are only nine chapters in this powerful prophetic book.

Amos was a shepherd of Judah whom the Lord called in the eighth century when the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam had become corrupt and was committing unjust acts on their neighbors. They were not showing forth the Lord's plan in a way which would reveal Him to the Nations.

"The Lion roars". This powerful line depicts the forceful way in which the Lord wants His Prophet to expose this corruption, denounce it, and call Israel to repentance and conversion. The sin of oppressing the poor and crushing the needy has consequences. It incurs the wrath of the Lord. It still does.

How do we treat the poor and the needy? How do we treat our neighbor?

2. Our Responsorial Psalm from David, also a prophetic voice in the Hebrew scriptures, reminds us that with the Lord there is always an invitation to experience His love and Mercy. He makes His way plain to us when we pray.

When we become aware that our behavior offends the Lord and is not in keeping with who we are as His son or daughter, the proper reaction is repentance. For Catholics, we also have recourse to the most beautiful Sacrament of Penance, the Sacrament of new beginnings.

3. The Gospel for today's Holy Mass is taken from the eighth chapter of St. Matthew's account. Jesus is getting into the boat with the disciples - then a great storm arises. He was asleep in the boat. In their fear, they awaken Him. They ask, "save us Lord." His response was twofold.

First, he spoke to them "Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?"

Then He spoke to the storm - and there was a great calm. Not only is this a powerful miracle which reveals that Jesus has the authority to calm storms, it speaks to us spiritually and allegorically. The Fathers of the early Church often interpreted the boat in such accounts as the Church. Jesus is always with us because we are with Him, in the Church, by virtue of our Baptism.

In the midst of difficulties, and they do come in life, it may seem as though He is asleep. But He is always in charge. Prayer is the path to overcoming every storm.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

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Daily Reading for Wednesday, July 3rd, 2024

Reading 1, Ephesians 2:19-22

19 So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household.

20 You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

21 Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord;

22 and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 117:1, 2

1 Alleluia! Praise Yahweh, all nations, extol him, all peoples,

2 for his faithful love is strong and his constancy never-ending.

Gospel, John 20:24-29

24 Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples said to him, 'We have seen the Lord,' but he answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.'

26 Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said.

27 Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving any more but believe.'

28 Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!'

29 Jesus said to him: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.



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Questions for Reflection for July 3, 2024

1. Today is the Feast of Thomas the Apostle. Our first reading, from the Apostle Paul, is from his letter to the Ephesians. A beautiful passage which reminds us that we are members of the Body of Christ, being built into a spiritual house, a Holy Temple, a dwelling place for the Lord. Do we believe this? The Key to these words becoming a reality to us is developing a prayer life, growing in an intimate communion with the Lord. That is done by learning to live in the Church and allowing the Trinity to make a home within us.

In Catholic theology we teach -and we are called to practice - the truth that the early fathers, Saints and Councils throughout the ages have affirmed; to belong to Jesus is to belong to His Body. Our membership in the Church is a very real participation in the very life of God; what the Apostle Peter referred to as a "participation in the Divine nature". (2 Peter 1:4) This kind of real, tangible experience of life in the Church is meant to be the lived experience of every Baptized Christian. For that to happen, we need, above all else, to pray.

Prayer is the path to a fuller and fuller encounter with God. In that relationship, we change. We enter a new life - beginning here and now; a life that is a sign of the fullness of life that is to come.

2. The Psalms of David are a litany of continued prayers to God. David was far from a perfect man. But, because he was a man of prayer, he was always able to turn from his sin, repent and begin again. And he never stopped communicating with God. That is what prayer is, a continual conversation, a communion with God. Even when the Psalm response at Holy Mass is short, it is always a call to prayer and praise, like today:

"Alleluia! Praise Yahweh, all nations, extol him, all peoples, for his faithful love is strong and his constancy never-ending."

3. Today's Gospel is a portion of the encounter between Thomas and the Risen Jesus. Thomas was not present when the Risen Lord appeared to them. Because of his response, Thomas is often called "Doubting Thomas". Yet the Christian tradition tells us that this so called "doubting Thomas" died a martyr for his faith. He became a messenger of Mercy to India, a missionary who shed his own blood for the Master whom he encountered on that day. His insistence on touching the Holy Wounds presented the Disciple John another opportunity to explain for all of us the implications of the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Thomas's response in his beautiful encounter with the Risen Lord, "My Lord and My God" reveals the heart of prayer. It also speaks to the essence of faith. His proclamation is a call to adoration and a living communion with God.

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His response has become the exclamation for millions, me included, when faced with the Mystery of Mysteries, the Holy Eucharist at the elevation during every Mass.

I suggest that Thomas was not a doubter, rather he was a believer. And he is a model for all of us at every Eucharist which is always the Feast of Mercy. Pope St Gregory the Great who occupied the Chair of Peter between 590 and 604 preached a marvelous homily on this encounter between Thomas and the Risen Lord. In it he asked:

"What conclusion, dear brethren, do you come to? Surely it was not by chance that this chosen disciple was missing in the first place? Or that on his return he heard, that hearing he doubted, that doubting he touched, and that touching he believed? It was by divine dispensation and not by chance that things fell out. God's Mercy worked wonderfully, for when that doubting disciple touched his Master's wounded flesh he cured the wound of our disbelief. So, this doubting disciple, who actually touched, became a witness to the reality of the resurrection"

Thank God for 'Doubting Thomas'. His doubts healed the wounds of our own disbelief. They also open up for all who look with the eyes of faith a deeper understanding of the redemptive effect of the wounds of Jesus - and the role our own wounds can have in our continuing call to conversion as we join them to His.

Thomas the doubter became Thomas the model believer, an example for each one of us.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

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Daily Reading for Thursday, July 4th, 2024

Reading 1, Amos 7:10-17

10 Amaziah the priest of Bethel then sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel as follows, 'Amos is plotting against you in the heart of the House of Israel; the country cannot tolerate his speeches.

11 For this is what Amos says, "Jeroboam is going to die by the sword, and Israel will go into captivity far from its native land." '

12 To Amos himself Amaziah said, 'Go away, seer, take yourself off to Judah, earn your living there, and there you can prophesy!

13 But never again will you prophesy at Bethel, for this is a royal sanctuary, a national temple.'

14 'I am not a prophet,' Amos replied to Amaziah, 'nor do I belong to a prophetic brotherhood. I am merely a herdsman and dresser of sycamore-figs.

15 But Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel."

16 So now listen to what Yahweh says: "You say: Do not prophesy against Israel, do not foretell doom on the House of Isaac!"

17 Very well, this is what Yahweh says, "Your wife will become a prostitute in the streets, your sons and daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parcelled out by measuring line, and you yourself will die on polluted soil and Israel will go into captivity far from its own land!"

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 11

8 The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes.

9 The fear of Yahweh is pure, lasting for ever; the judgements of Yahweh are true, upright, every one,

10 more desirable than gold, even than the finest gold; his words are sweeter than honey, that drips from the comb.

11 Thus your servant is formed by them; observing them brings great reward.

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Gospel, Matthew 9:1-8

1 He got back in the boat, crossed the water and came to his home town.

2 And suddenly some people brought him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take comfort, my child, your sins are forgiven.'

3 And now some scribes said to themselves, 'This man is being blasphemous.'

4 Knowing what was in their minds Jesus said, 'Why do you have such wicked thoughts in your hearts?

5 Now, which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"?

6 But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' -- then he said to the paralytic-'get up, pick up your bed and go off home.'

7 And the man got up and went home.

8 A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for having given such authority to human beings.



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Questions for Reflection for July 4, 2024

1. In our first reading we hear of the priest of Bethel named Amaziah warning Jeroboam, the then King of Israel, about the prophet Amos. In fact, Amaziah demanded that Amos leave and prophecy no longer. The fact is, prophecy is often unsettling, when it calls for repentance and change of life in particular. That is what the Prophets of Israel did, very often.

Then, in the early Church, the gift of prophecy functioned. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in his first letter to them: "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)

Not only did the prophetic utterances of Amos come about, they prompted a time of repentance and warning. So too, any authentic prophecy in the Church, will always lead to repentance and conversion. That is why it must be "tested".

For example, the Catholic Church has a rigorous approach to what are called "private revelations" to insure they are authentic and do not contradict the Scripture or the Deposit of faith.

But the prophetic is real. Because the Lord always desires to speak to His people, to lead them close to Him. Do we believe in the presence of the gift of prophecy in the Church? If so, do we pay attention? Are we always open to hearing from the Lord and reforming our lives?

2. David the Psalmist leads us in our response "The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes. The fear of Yahweh is pure, lasting forever; the judgements of Yahweh are true, upright, everyone, more desirable than gold, even than the finest gold; his words are sweeter than honey, that drips from the comb. Thus, your servant is formed by them; observing them brings great reward."

Are we listening for the precepts and words of the Lord? Are we asking the Holy Spirit to work in our life and give us spiritual ears to hear the words of the Lord?

3. The Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass is the wonderful account of the healing of the paralytic. Notice these words "Some people brought him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take comfort, my child, your sins are forgiven.'" Whose faith was Jesus referring to.

The people who brought the paralytic to Him. THEIR FAITH MOVED THE LORD.

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Again, not only was this a powerful physical miracle, which it was. And not only does it reveal the hardness of heart of some of the Scribes who, witnessing the very power of God at work, focused instead on trying to undermine the messianic mission of Jesus and missed the moment. But it has a spiritual message for each one of us.

In so many ways we are all that paralytic. Sin paralyzes us within. And we need one another to help us be healed and forgiven. Our prayer, our faith, offered for others, moves the heart and hand of the Lord in their lives. Do we believe this? Do we pray for one another. Do we bring one another to the Lord?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 5, 2024



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Daily Reading for Friday, July 5th, 2024

Reading 1, Amos 8:4-6, 9-12

4 Listen to this, you who crush the needy and reduce the oppressed to nothing,

5 you who say, 'When will New Moon be over so that we can sell our corn, and Sabbath, so that we can market our wheat? Then, we can make the bushel-measure smaller and the shekel-weight bigger, by fraudulently tampering with the scales.

6 We can buy up the weak for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals, and even get a price for the sweepings of the wheat.'

9 'On that Day- declares the Lord Yahweh- I shall make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.

10 I shall turn your festivals into mourning and all your singing into lamentation; I shall make you all wear sacking round your waists and have all your heads shaved. I shall make it like the mourning for an only child, and it will end like the bitterest of days.

11 'The days are coming- declares the Lord Yahweh- when I shall send a famine on the country, not hunger for food, not thirst for water, but famine for hearing Yahweh's word.

12 People will stagger from sea to sea, will wander from the north to the east, searching for Yahweh's word, but will not find it.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 119:2, 10, 20, 30, 40, 131

2 Blessed are those who observe his instructions, who seek him with all their hearts,

10 With all my heart I seek you, do not let me stray from your commandments.

20 My heart is pining away with longing at all times for your judgements.

30 I have chosen the way of constancy, I have moulded myself to your judgements.

40 See how I yearn for your precepts; in your saving justice give me life.

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131 I open wide my mouth, panting eagerly for your commandments.

Gospel, Matthew 9:9-13

9 As Jesus was walking on from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

10 Now while he was at table in the house it happened that a number of tax collectors and sinners came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples.

11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?'

12 When he heard this he replied, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick.

13 Go and learn the meaning of the words: Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice. And indeed I came to call not the upright, but sinners.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 5, 2024

1. The Book of the Prophet Amos speaks to us of the consequences of turning against the Lord and His Ways. We incur the judgment of God. The passage we heard today was taken from chapter eight. It is the last of five symbols the Prophet uses to explain what will happen to those who turn against the Lord. He likens them to a basket of summer fruit which quickly rots.

The prophet roars against the behavior of those who place economic profit over caring for the poor and the needy and cheat in business. "Listen to this, you who crush the needy and reduce the oppressed to nothing, you who say, 'When will New Moon be over so that we can sell our corn, and Sabbath, so that we can market our wheat? Then, we can make the bushel-measure smaller and the shekel-weight bigger, by fraudulently tampering with the scales. We can buy up the weak for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals, and even get a price for the sweepings of the wheat.'"

Our faith must be manifested in a lifestyle which reflects the Lord's plan of salvation as well. We are His representatives. How are we doing in truly living our faith every day?

2. Our Psalm response continues the theme with these words: "Blessed are those who observe his instructions, who seek him with all their hearts, with all my heart I seek you, do not let me stray from your commandments."

Do we, like the Psalmist "yearn for the law of the Lord?" Do we seek His face continually? This way of life leads to life, to flourishing and to genuine happiness.

3. Our Gospel for today is from Chapter 9 of St. Matthew. It is a record of the Apostle Matthews calling to follow Jesus. Matthew was a tax collector. A position hated by the Jews, because the tax collected was to support the Romans who occupied their land and treated them poorly. The Jews, like Matthew, who collected the tax were considered, by many, to be traitors.

Yet, when this tax collector heard the voice of the Lord and those two words "Follow Me", he immediately responded. And the tax collector became an Apostle who would be powerfully transformed by grace and used by the Lord to change history. Have we responded to the Lords call in our own lives? No matter what our past, when we do respond, He will, as he did with Matthew, make us new creations. Do we believe this?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 6, 2024



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Daily Reading for Saturday, July 6th, 2024

Reading 1, Amos 9:11-15

11 On that Day, I shall rebuild the tottering hut of David, make good the gaps in it, restore its ruins and rebuild it as it was in the days of old,

12 for them to be master of what is left of Edom and of all the nations once called mine -Yahweh declares, and he will perform it.

13 The days are coming- declares Yahweh- when the ploughman will tread on the heels of the reaper, and the treader of grapes on the heels of the sower of seed, and the mountains will run with new wine and the hills all flow with it.

14 I shall restore the fortunes of my people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will plant vineyards and drink their wine, they will lay out gardens and eat their produce.

15 And I shall plant them in their own soil and they will never be uprooted again from the country which I have given them, declares Yahweh, your God.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 85:9, 11-12, 13-14

9 His saving help is near for those who fear him, his glory will dwell in our land.

11 Loyalty will spring up from the earth, and Justice will lean down from heaven.

12 Yahweh will himself give prosperity, and our soil will yield its harvest.

13 Justice will walk before him, treading out a path.

Gospel, Matthew 9:14-17

14 Then John's disciples came to him and said, 'Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?'

15 Jesus replied, 'Surely the bridegroom's attendants cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.'



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16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old cloak, because the patch pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse.

17 Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, the wine runs out, and the skins are lost. No; they put new wine in fresh skins and both are preserved.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 6, 2024

1. In our first reading from the Prophet Amos, we hear good and joyful news from the Prophet for the Nation of Israel. This seems different than what we have been hearing. Over the days we have been hearing this Book proclaimed as the first reading at Holy Mass, the Lord is correcting His people through the words of this powerful Prophet.

This excerpt from chapter nine, the last chapter of this relatively short book of the Hebrew Scriptures, we hear the important connection between the discipline of the Lord and His loving plan. Listen to this beautiful promise, the last words of the Book of the Prophet Amos:

"I shall restore the fortunes of my people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will plant vineyards and drink their wine, they will lay out gardens and eat their produce. And I shall plant them in their own soil, and they will never be uprooted again from the country which I have given them, declares Yahweh, your God."

This truth is also addressed in the New Testament letter to the Hebrews. In Chapter 12, after the writer reminds the early believers - and each one of us - that we need to look to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith, he explains the connection between the Lord's correction and discipline with His loving plan of restoration:

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves and chastises every son whom he receives."

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons".

The writer of this letter is quoting from Proverbs 3: 11 and 12.' The Lord's discipline in our own lives, His correction, is always because He loves us and wants us to be happy and free. Do we believe this?

2. And David the Psalmist, in our response reiterates this important truth: His saving help is near for those who fear him, his glory will dwell in our land. Loyalty will spring up from the earth, and Justice will lean down from heaven. Yahweh will himself give prosperity, and our soil will yield its harvest. Justice will walk before him, treading out a path.



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3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass, Jesus answers a question as to why his disciples did not fast, like the disciples of John. He answers: 'Surely the bridegroom's attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then, on that day, they will fast.'

He, Jesus, is the bridegroom. The Church is the bride. While He was still with us in his earthly ministry, there was no need to fast. But and here is one of the first references from the Lord of his impending arrest, voluntary suffering and death, Resurrection, and ascension. he tells them that He will be taken away. And, in fact, all of this happened - and fasting became and still is - a part of the way of life of His Bride, the Church, until He returns.

Then he uses an image which his hearers would understand well, mending a cloak which needs a patch and the use of old and new wineskins. His message - in Him, new has come. With Him, the Old Covenant, while not abrogated, is to be fulfilled, so that the New Covenant can begin and welcome the whole world into its embrace.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 7, 2024



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Daily Reading for Sunday, July 7th, 2024

Reading 1, Ezekiel 2:2-5

2 As he said these words the spirit came into me and put me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

3 He said, 'Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to the rebels who have rebelled against me. They and their ancestors have been in revolt against me up to the present day.

4 Because they are stubborn and obstinate children, I am sending you to them, to say, "Lord Yahweh says this."

5 Whether they listen or not, this tribe of rebels will know there is a prophet among them.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 123:1-2, 2, 3-4

1 [Song of Ascents] I lift up my eyes to you who are enthroned in heaven.

2 Just as the eyes of slaves are on their masters' hand, or the eyes of a slave-girl on the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are on Yahweh our God, for him to take pity on us.

3 Have pity on us, Yahweh, have pity, for we have had our full share of scorn,

4 more than our share of jeers from the complacent. (Scorn is for the proud.)

Reading 2, Second Corinthians 12:7-10

7 Wherefore, so that I should not get above myself, I was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to batter me and prevent me from getting above myself.

8 About this, I have three times pleaded with the Lord that it might leave me;

9 but he has answered me, 'My grace is enough for you: for power is at full stretch in weakness.' It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me;



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10 and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.

Gospel, Mark 6:1-6

1 Leaving that district, he went to his home town, and his disciples accompanied him.

2 With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him?'

3 This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?' And they would not accept him.

4 And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is despised only in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house';

5 and he could work no miracle there, except that he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them.

6 He was amazed at their lack of faith. He made a tour round the villages, teaching.



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Questions for Reflection for July 7, 2024

1. In our first reading the Lord calls the great Hebrew prophet Ezekiel to speak to His people to "the sons of Israel", "to a Nation of rebels". The role of Prophets, in both the Hebrew Scriptures (what Christians call the Old Testament) and the New Testament, as well as throughout the history of the Church, is usually difficult. The Lord raises them up and then sends His word to His people - to them and through them. They, the messengers, are usually subject to persecution, resistance, and suffering.

The Lord also tells Ezekiel "Be not afraid of them or their words"... Ezekiel engaged in his prophetic ministry during the Babylonian exile. He would prophesy the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomons Temple. This was a consequence of the sin of Israel. And Israel did not want to hear the message.

But he also prophesied the restoration of Israel. He, like all of the Lord's prophets, called Israel, and, in the New Testament and Church history, the Church (which is the New Israel) called the people to repent. To turn away from sin and rebellion and turn back to the Lord.

Are we listening to the prophets of this hour? Are we aware of the messages of our Lady in her various appearances? Are we reading and listening to prophetic voices, such as Pope St John Paul II, and others? Are living lives of repentance and seeking to turn more and more toward the Lord? We live in an age where there is a great falling away from God, even within the Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Like the Psalm response we heard today are "Our eyes fixed on the Lord, pleading for His Mercy?"

2. In our second reading, we hear more from the Second letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. His challenges in Corinth are an example of what often happens when the Lord raises up prophetic leadership within the Church. The kind of leadership demonstrated by the Apostle Paul. His was, and still is, a prophetic voice to the Church. in the passage we heard today, he also speaks of the "thorn in the flesh". Some Church fathers thought it was a physical ailment. Others, the tribulations he faces, and the oppositions, from right within the Church.

But even though he begged the Lord to take it from Him, that did not happen. In fact, as the Apostle recounts, the response He heard from the Lord is "My power is perfected in your weakness" The Lord in His infinite mercy and love has made our own weakness and frailties become the path to a deepening relationship with Him. They are the door to our own progress in our baptismal call to holiness. This process of being emptied of self and filled with His life happens by grace. However, that wonderful free gift invites our continual response, our cooperation, with His loving plan.



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St. Francis De Sales (1567-1610) was a great pastor of souls. He once wrote in a letter to one of the many who sought his holy counsel "God wants your misery to be the throne of His mercy. He desires that your powerlessness be the seat of His omnipotence." Let us reflect on our own "weaknesses" and ask the Lord to use them to reveal His strength.

3. In our Gospel text for today's Holy Mass, taken from the sixth chapter of St. Mark, we see the greatest example of a rejection of a Prophet. The Very Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Incarnate Word of God, was rejected in his own hometown. "They took offense at Him".

In the ordinariness of His Sacred Humanity, He was simply too much for them. They took offense at God Incarnate! After all, he was the son of a carpenter, and his extended family lived in the neighborhood! How could He preach this kind of message of repentance? How could he work miracles? Other Gospel accounts communicate this same kind of spiritual blindness evidenced in those who should have welcomed Him. Mark writes that many of his neighbors took him for a madman! (Mk. 3:21)

So, it very is with those who bear His name - Christians - if we truly seek to walk in His ways, to participate in His ongoing redemptive mission, to be faithful to His continued work, through His Body, the Church, of which we are members. They will - they do - take offense at us! Are we ready for that? Are we willing to stand with Jesus Christ in this hour when a new paganism, masquerading as a "progressive" world view, is denying God, and rejecting His ways?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection July 8, 2024



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Daily Reading for Monday, July 8th, 2024

Reading 1, Hosea 2:16, 17-18, 21-22

16 But look, I am going to seduce her and lead her into the desert and speak to her heart.

17 There I shall give her back her vineyards and make the Vale of Achor a gateway of hope. There she will respond as when she was young, as on the day when she came up from Egypt.

18 When that day comes- declares Yahweh- you will call me, 'My husband', no more will you call me, 'My Baal'.

21 I shall betroth you to myself for ever, I shall betroth you in uprightness and justice, and faithful love and tenderness.

22 Yes, I shall betroth you to myself in loyalty and in the knowledge of Yahweh.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 145:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

2 Day after day I shall bless you, I shall praise your name for ever and ever.

3 Great is Yahweh and worthy of all praise, his greatness beyond all reckoning.

4 Each age will praise your deeds to the next, proclaiming your mighty works.

5 Your renown is the splendour of your glory, I will ponder the story of your wonders.

6 They will speak of your awesome power, and I shall recount your greatness.

7 They will bring out the memory of your great generosity, and joyfully acclaim your saving justice.

8 Yahweh is tenderness and pity, slow to anger, full of faithful love.

9 Yahweh is generous to all, his tenderness embraces all his creatures.



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Gospel, Matthew 9:18-26

18 While he was speaking to them, suddenly one of the officials came up, who bowed low in front of him and said, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and her life will be saved.'

19 Jesus rose and, with his disciples, followed him.

20 Then suddenly from behind him came a woman, who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, and she touched the fringe of his cloak,

21 for she was thinking, 'If only I can touch his cloak I shall be saved.'

22 Jesus turned round and saw her; and he said to her, 'Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.' And from that moment the woman was saved.

23 When Jesus reached the official's house and saw the flute-players, with the crowd making a commotion, he said,

24 'Get out of here; the little girl is not dead; she is asleep.' And they ridiculed him.

25 But when the people had been turned out he went inside and took her by the hand; and she stood up.

26 And the news of this spread all round the countryside.



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Questions for Reflection for July 8, 2024

1. In the Book of the Prophet Hosea, the Prophets life becomes an analogy for Israel's relationship with the Lord. In so doing, it begins a theme which carries on in other Prophetic Books in the Hebrew Scriptures such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, treating Israel's relationship with the Lord as a marriage bond and her infidelity as a sin against the marital covenant.

Of course, in the New Testament, this theme is carried through in the Church as the Bride of Christ. In the passages of today's reading the Lord speaks through the Prophet to His people, seeking to woo her back to Him and espouse her to Himself.

The Catholic Catechism explains this nuptial or marital relationship:

"The nuptial covenant between God and his people Israel had prepared the way for the new and everlasting covenant in which the Son of God, by becoming incarnate and giving his life, has united to himself in a certain way all mankind saved by him, thus preparing for "the wedding-feast of the Lamb". (CCC# 1612, citing Rev. 19:7,9)

The Bible, from beginning to the end, uses marriage as a metaphor, sign and symbol to reveal the plan of God for the whole human race. Marriage was God's plan from the beginning as we see in the first book of Genesis. Throughout the Old Testament, the Lord speaks through His messengers to remind Israel that the Lord has espoused her to Himself.

Then, in the fullness of time, God sent the Bridegroom, Jesus, his only Son, to initiate the New Israel, the Church - through His saving Incarnation, life and redemptive death. At the cross he espoused Himself to the Church, which is now His Bride. The wedding language informs the entirety of the New Testament culminating with the Wedding Feast of the Lamb which opens the portal of the mystery to reveal God's plan fulfilled in eternity.

2. In our responsorial Psalm we join with David the Psalmist in offering Praise to the Lord by recounting His greatness and His action in our lives. Do we do that? When was the last time we spent time in vocal prayer thanking the Lord for His Actions in our life? Let's do it today and every day. It not only brings joy to the heart of the Lord; it lifts us up and draws us closer to Him.
3. The Gospel for today presents us with two wonderful healings performed by Jesus, the raising of the official's daughter from the dead and the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage. Notice that both signs of the Kingdom, both miraculous healings, resulted from a sincere request, a prayer from the heart.



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The official knelt before the Lord and said, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and her life will be saved.'

The woman with the life-threatening flow of blood touched the fringe of his cloak, for she was thinking, 'If only I can touch his cloak I shall be saved.'

And we heard "Jesus turned round and saw her; and he said to her, 'Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.'

Miracles are constantly occurring. The real questions are do we see them? Do we have the eyes of living faith which recognize the hand of the Lord at work? Do we ask for them?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection July 9, 2024



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, July 9th, 2024

Reading 1, Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13

4 They have set up kings, but without my consent, and appointed princes, but without my knowledge. With their silver and gold, they have made themselves idols, but only to be destroyed.

5 I spurn your calf, Samaria! My anger blazes against them! How long will it be before they recover their innocence?

6 For it is the product of Israel- a craftsman made the thing, it is no god at all! The calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces!

7 Since they sow the wind, they will reap the whirlwind; stalk without ear, it will never yield flour- or if it does, foreigners will swallow it.

11 Ephraim keeps building altars for his sins, these very altars are themselves a sin.

12 However much of my Law I write for him, Ephraim regards it as alien to him.

13 They offer sacrifices to me and eat the meat, they do not win Yahweh's favour. On the contrary, he will remember their guilt and punish their sins; they will have to go back to Egypt.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 115:3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10

3 Our God is in heaven, he creates whatever he chooses.

4 They have idols of silver and gold, made by human hands.

5 These have mouths but say nothing, have eyes but see nothing,

6 have ears but hear nothing, have noses but smell nothing.

7 They have hands but cannot feel, have feet but cannot walk, no sound comes from their throats.

8 Their makers will end up like them, and all who rely on them.

9 House of Israel, rely on Yahweh; he is their help and their shield.

10 House of Aaron, rely on Yahweh; he is their help and their shield.

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Gospel, Matthew 9:32-38

32 They had only just left when suddenly a man was brought to him, a dumb demoniac.

33 And when the devil was driven out, the dumb man spoke and the people were amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.'

34 But the Pharisees said, 'It is through the prince of devils that he drives out devils.'

35 Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness.

36 And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.

37 Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 9, 2024

1. In our first reading, the Lord speaks very strong words through the Prophet Hosea. Israel is in apostasy. She has given her heart, her worship and her loyalty to idols, false gods. Israel has made kings, but the Lord says, "not by my authority".

The Lord is angry, and rightly so. In the verse that follows the last verse of today's first reading, the Lord says through His Prophet "Israel has forgotten his maker".

So too, this "forgetting the Lord" happens to the New Israel, the Church. We live in an age where many, even some in leadership, have forgotten God and turned to new forms of idolatry. The Catholic Catechism says, "apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith". (CCC #2089)

The Catechism also addresses idolatry in these words:

"Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast" refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God." (CCC#2113)

Sadly, there are people falling away from the faith in our own day. While we pray for them and trust the Lord will watch over His Church, we need to regularly examine our own lives and ask for the grace to stay faithful.

2. The Psalm response for today also addresses idolatry "They have idols of silver and gold, made by human hands. These have mouths but say nothing, have eyes but see nothing, have ears but hear nothing, have noses but smell nothing. They have hands but cannot feel, have feet but cannot walk, no sound comes from their throats. Their makers will end up like them, and all who rely on them."

Now that we have heard the teaching of the Church on idolatry, if we have any area of our own life which has drawn us away from God, now is the time to renounce it and return to the True God.

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3. In this powerful Gospel for today's Mass, Jesus frees a man possessed by a demon. So strong was the hold this demon had on the man, that he could not even speak. So, as a clear sign that Jesus is the promised Messiah, Jesus delivers the man from the demon and his speech is restored. This great sign of the Kingdom is recorded in the ninth chapter of Matthews Gospel. It follows other miracles, like to resurrection of dead daughter of a ruler, the healing of two blind men...

But notice that some of the Pharisees, religious leaders of their day, said 'It is through the prince of devils that he drives out devils.' They were so blinded by their own self-centered attempts to hold on to power and prominence, a form of idolatry, that they attributed the power of God to the work of the devil.

The Catechism warns:

"There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss" (CCC # 1864). May the Lord help us to recognize his work in our own day.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 10, 2024



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, July 10th, 2024

Reading 1, Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12

1 Israel was a luxuriant vine yielding plenty of fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; the richer his land became, the richer he made the sacred pillars.

2 Theirs is a divided heart; now they will have to pay for it. He himself will hack down their altars and wreck their sacred pillars.

3 Then they will say, 'We have no king because we have not feared Yahweh, but what could the king do for us?'

7 Samaria has had her day. Her king is like a straw drifting on the water.

8 The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed; thorns and thistles will grow over their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' and to the hills, 'Fall on us!'

12 Sow saving justice for yourselves, reap a harvest of faithful love; break up your fallow ground: it is time to seek out Yahweh until he comes to rain saving justice down on you.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 105:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

2 Sing to him, make music for him, recount all his wonders!

3 Glory in his holy name, let the hearts that seek Yahweh rejoice!

4 Seek Yahweh and his strength, tirelessly seek his presence!

5 Remember the marvels he has done, his wonders, the judgements he has spoken.

6 Stock of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob whom he chose!

7 He is Yahweh our God, his judgements touch the whole world.

Gospel, Matthew 10:1-7

1 He summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness.

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2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon who is known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John;

3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who was also his betrayer.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them as follows: 'Do not make your way to gentile territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town;

6 go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

7 And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.



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Questions for Reflection for July 10, 2024

1. The Lord, speaking through His Prophet Hosea, addresses Israel's sins - and the captivity that resulted from it. But with the consequences, there is always the promise of mercy "it is time to seek out Yahweh until he comes to rain saving justice down on you.". The Lord does not want us to remain in our sins either. He wants us to be free. The path to that freedom is repentance and conversion. As it was with the Israel of old, so it is with the new Israel of the Church, and of each one of us, who are members of the mystical Body of Christ, the Church.

Citing the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, the Catholic Catechism addresses sin as an abuse of freedom in these profound words:

"The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin."(CCC #1733, Romans 6: 17)

We have been created in the Image and likeness of God, that includes the capacity to choose. What we choose not only changes the world around us, it changes us. When we choose against God, against the true, the good and the beautiful, we end up in captivity. When we choose the Lord and His Ways, we grow in freedom.

What are we choosing?

2. When we choose the Lord and His ways, we also find the path to genuine joy. David the Psalmist certainly knew both the consequences of sin, he sinned greatly, but also, the freedom which comes from repentance and the amendment of life to which the Lord calls us. So, he calls to us in our responsorial Psalm "Sing to him, make music for him, recount all his wonders!

Glory in his holy name, let the hearts that seek Yahweh rejoice! Seek Yahweh and his strength, tirelessly seek his presence!"

Are we tirelessly seeking His Presence?

3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass, we have Matthew's account of the Great Commission. "He summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness." Jesus gives them His Authority. The Church is God's plan for the whole world. And she exists to evangelize. Each one of us, by virtue of our Baptism, share in the redemptive mission the Lord entrusted to His Church.



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We all need to view ourselves as missionaries in this moment in history. We are here by Gods design. This mission is not reserved for a group of "professionals", whether they be clergy or the growing "professional" lay faithful whose numbers seem to be multiplying. Rather, it is the task incumbent on all of the Christian faithful. That includes you and me.

Do you see yourself as a missionary?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 11, 2024



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Daily Reading for Thursday, July 11th, 2024

Reading 1, Hosea 11:1, 3-4, 8-9

1 When Israel was a child I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt.

3 I myself taught Ephraim to walk, I myself took them by the arm, but they did not know that I was the one caring for them,

4 that I was leading them with human ties, with leading-strings of love, that, with them, I was like someone lifting an infant to his cheek, and that I bent down to feed him.

8 Ephraim, how could I part with you? Israel, how could I give you up? How could I make you like Admah or treat you like Zeboiim? My heart within me is overwhelmed, fever grips my inmost being.

9 I will not give rein to my fierce anger, I will not destroy Ephraim again, for I am God, not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I shall not come to you in anger.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 80:2, 3, 15-16

2 over Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh; rouse your valour and come to our help.

3 God, bring us back, let your face shine on us and we shall be safe.

15 protect what your own hand has planted.

16 They have thrown it on the fire like dung, the frown of your rebuke will destroy them.

Gospel, Matthew 10:7-15

7 And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.

8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils. You received without charge, give without charge.

9 Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with coppers for your purses,



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10 with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the labourer deserves his keep.

11 'Whatever town or village you go into, seek out someone worthy and stay with him until you leave.

12 As you enter his house, salute it,

13 and if the house deserves it, may your peace come upon it; if it does not, may your peace come back to you.

14 And if anyone does not welcome you or listen to what you have to say, as you walk out of the house or town shake the dust from your feet.

15 In truth I tell you, on the Day of Judgement it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.



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Questions for Reflection for July 11, 2024

1. In our first reading from the Prophet Hosea, we heard one of the most beautiful examples of God's tender love for Israel "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. I myself taught Ephraim to walk, I myself took them by the arm, but they did not know that I was the one caring for them, that I was leading them with human ties, with leading-strings of love, that, with them, I was like someone lifting an infant to his cheek, and that I bent down to feed him."

Anyone who says that the Lord is only fierce or harsh in the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament, has not read the very Books they criticize. In fact, one of the earliest heresies of the Church, Marcionism, dismissed the God of the Old Testament. This beautiful tender description of the Lord runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Sin deserves and merits judgement. But we are the ones who choose it. There are consequences to sin. But the Lord is always waiting for us, as a Father, to repent and return. His just punishment is always intended to bring us back to Him. And even after He had sent the Law and the Prophets to aid Israel in returning to Him, and they continued to sin, God never abandoned them.

In the fullness of time, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ. He, the innocent One, took upon Himself the consequences of our own sin and through His Passion, Death and Resurrection, has freed us from the consequences of sin. He has also freed us for a New Way of Living.

How are we doing?

2. The whole of Psalm 80, from which our response offers only verses 2, 3, 15 and 16, is a beautiful Prayer from David, asking the Lord to restore Israel. I encourage all who are viewing or listening to me today, to read the entire Psalm. We should offer it for the Church in this urgent hour. Restore your Church Oh Lord.
3. The Gospel text for today's Holy Mass continues the Great Commission. Jesus is sending out the twelve. He gives them the authority He has, to deliver people from demons, to heal the sick, to raise the dead. That authority is still present in the Church. The Bishops are the successors of the Apostles. But, sadly, in too many places, this authority, this power, is not being exercised or demonstrated. Perhaps for lack of belief. Or, perhaps because the enemy, and the devil is real, has crept even into the sanctuary.

We need a new evangelization of the Church so that she can rise up and lead a new missionary age.



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Pope St John Paul II coined the phrase "New Evangelization" in his 1990 encyclical letter entitled "Mission of the Redeemer." He wrote, "God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples".

We need to hear his words once again. We need to remember that the Church offers Gods loving plan of salvation for the whole world. This New Evangelization invites each of us to live our baptismal vocation completely given over to the work of the Lord. It is meant to bring about an authentic renewal of the Church so that she can undertake a new missionary outreach to the whole world. Only a Church fully alive in the Lord and filled with His Spirit can carry out such an evangelical mission.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 12, 2024



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Daily Reading for Friday, July 12th, 2024

Reading 1, Hosea 14:2-10

2 Israel, come back to Yahweh your God your guilt was the cause of your downfall.

3 Provide yourself with words and come back to Yahweh. Say to him, 'Take all guilt away and give us what is good, instead of bulls we will dedicate to you our lips.

4 Assyria cannot save us, we will not ride horses any more, or say, "Our God!" to our own handiwork, for you are the one in whom orphans find compassion.'

5 I shall cure them of their disloyalty, I shall love them with all my heart, for my anger has turned away from them.

6 I shall fall like dew on Israel, he will bloom like the lily and thrust out roots like the cedar of Lebanon;

7 he will put out new shoots, he will have the beauty of the olive tree and the fragrance of Lebanon.

8 They will come back to live in my shade; they will grow wheat again, they will make the vine flourish, their wine will be as famous as Lebanon's.

9 What has Ephraim to do with idols any more when I hear him and watch over him? I am like an evergreen cypress, you owe your fruitfulness to me.

10 Let the wise understand these words, let the intelligent grasp their meaning, for Yahweh's ways are straight and the upright will walk in them, but sinners will stumble.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 51:3-4, 8-9, 12-13, 14, 17

3 For I am well aware of my offences, my sin is constantly in mind.

4 Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong, that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence, and your victory may appear when you give judgement,

8 Let me hear the sound of joy and gladness, and the bones you have crushed will dance.

9 Turn away your face from my sins and wipe away all my guilt.

12 Give me back the joy of your salvation, sustain in me a generous spirit.

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13 I shall teach the wicked your paths, and sinners will return to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodshed, God, God of my salvation, and my tongue will acclaim your saving justice.

17 Sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a broken, contrite heart you never scorn.

Gospel, Matthew 10:16-23

16 Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as snakes and yet innocent as doves.

17 'Be prepared for people to hand you over to sanhedrins and scourge you in their synagogues.

18 You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, as evidence to them and to the gentiles.

19 But when you are handed over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes,

20 because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you.

21 'Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will come forward against their parents and have them put to death.

22 You will be universally hated on account of my name; but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved.

23 If they persecute you in one town, take refuge in the next; and if they persecute you in that, take refuge in another. In truth I tell you, you will not have gone the round of the towns of Israel before the Son of man comes.



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Questions for Reflection for July 12, 2024

1. In our first reading we continue to hear the Lord's words being spoken to Israel through the Prophet Hosea. Strong, honest and rich in Mercy, "Israel, come back to Yahweh your God your guilt was the cause of your downfall. Provide yourself with words and come back to Yahweh. Say to him, 'Take all guilt away and give us what is good, instead of bulls we will dedicate to you, our lips.'" This honest acknowledgement of sin is absolutely essential to growing in the Christian life. We can't play the "blame game". When we sin, WE ARE THE ONES RESPONSIBLE. The Lord awaits our genuine repentance.

The Catholic Catechism in its treatment of sin, grace and conversion says: "As St. Paul affirms, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." But to do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us "righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by his Word and by his Spirit, casts a living light on sin:"

Then the Catechism quotes Pope St John Paul II:

"Conversion requires convincing of sin; it includes the interior judgment of conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's inmost being, becomes at the same time the start of a new grant of grace and love: "Receive the Holy Spirit." Thus, in this "convincing concerning sin" we discover a double gift: the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Consoler." (CCC #1848)

In his first letter to the early Churches, the Beloved Disciple John writes: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10)

Are we honest about our own sins, or do we excuse them, even blame others? That is not the path to freedom.

2. David the Psalmist, whose words we hear in our Responsorial Psalm, shows us how to be honest in confessing our sin, in order to be forgiven and find the freedom for which we long. Let us hear his words and let's make them our own "For I am well aware of my offences, my sin is constantly in mind. Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong, that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence, and your victory may appear when you give judgement, let me hear the sound of joy and gladness, and the bones you have crushed will dance. Turn away your face from my sins and wipe away all my guilt."



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3. In the portion of the tenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which is appointed for today's Holy Mass, Jesus is instructing the twelve before sending them out to announce that the Kingdom of God is nearby. He warns them that they will be treated as He is being treated. And they will face the same opposition. But He also tells them that the Spirit of the Father will be with them and speak through them.

Every word he spoke came about. In fact, the early Church Father and historian Tertullian wrote that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church". We are Christians today because they heeded His words, and led by the Spirit, they went out and proclaimed the message of the Kingdom in both word and deed. These words of Jesus are for all of us today. We are living in an age where hostility to the Christian faith and the Church is growing at an alarming rate. Like them we are being sent out like sheep among wolves.

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as snakes and yet innocent as doves." We must be vigilant, so we can recognize the wolves disguised as lambs and be able to distinguish the false from the true prophets in our own day. But we must remain simple and pure of heart, in the midst of this mission. The Holy Spirit will empower us to respond to this call of Jesus.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection July 13, 2024



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Daily Reading for Saturday, July 13th, 2024

Reading 1, Isaiah 6:1-8

1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne; his train filled the sanctuary.

2 Above him stood seraphs, each one with six wings: two to cover its face, two to cover its feet and two for flying;

3 and they were shouting these words to each other: Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth.

4 The door-posts shook at the sound of their shouting, and the Temple was full of smoke.

5 Then I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth.'

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding in its hand a live coal which it had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.

7 With this it touched my mouth and said: 'Look, this has touched your lips, your guilt has been removed and your sin forgiven.'

8 I then heard the voice of the Lord saying: 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I, send me.'

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 93:1, 1-2, 5

1 Yahweh is king, robed in majesty, robed is Yahweh and girded with power.

2 The world is indeed set firm, it can never be shaken; your throne is set firm from of old, from all eternity you exist.

5 Your decrees stand firm, unshakeable, holiness is the beauty of your house, Yahweh, for all time to come.



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Gospel, Matthew 10:24-33

24 'Disciple is not superior to teacher, nor slave to master.

25 It is enough for disciple to grow to be like teacher, and slave like master. If they have called the master of the house "Beelzebul", how much more the members of his household?

26 'So do not be afraid of them. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear.

27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops.

28 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

29 Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing.

30 Why, every hair on your head has been counted.

31 So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

32 'So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven.

33 But the one who disowns me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.



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Questions for Reflection for July 13, 2024

1. In our first reading we heard a wonderful passage from the 6th chapter of the Book of the great Hebrew, Messianic Prophet Isaiah. He had a vision in the temple in which he was able to see the Lord seated upon a throne and surrounded by the hosts of heaven. It is a powerful vision, and, in fact, it is recalled in the last Book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation. The cry of the Angels in worship, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with his glory..." has also been a part of the Liturgy of the Christian Church, the Holy Mass, from the earliest Christian centuries.

It is in this context of this vision that the Prophet receives His own calling to proclaim the Lord's word to Israel, - both the Israel of Old, and the Church, the New Israel -. The symbol of the burning coal on which incense was burned touching his mouth and purifying him for mission is very powerful. God's word purifies our thoughts, our lives, our words if we receive it.

"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" says the Lord to the Prophet. "Here I am Lord, send me," said Isaiah.

Every one of us is called, from our Baptism forward, to participate in the threefold mission of the Church as living members of the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. We are called to participate in the continuing mission of the Lord, as Priest, Prophet, and King. Do we believe this? Have we asked the Lord to help us believe it? Have we said YES, Send me?

2. Our Responsorial Psalm, from Psalm 93, carries forth the theme. David was also a prophet. Yes, he had sinned, egregiously, but he always repented and returned. We should draw strength from his witness and his words. We repeat them daily in the Prayer of the Church. Our Baptismal calling and vocation continue, even if we fail and fall. We must repent, get up and return. If our sin is mortal, we must avail ourselves of the grace of the Sacrament of Penance and begin again. Do we do this?
3. The wonderful words of Jesus given to us in today's Gospel should help us to stay faithful. Every hair of our head is numbered, He has "got us", as the expression goes. We need not fear anyone or anything.

Faith is what is required. "...there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. 'So, if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.'"

On this day, choose to follow Jesus Christ. Choose to allow Him to lead you. Choose to be His disciple. Be Not Afraid but believe and live your calling.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 14, 2024



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Daily Reading for Sunday, July 14th, 2024

Reading 1, Amos 7:12-15

12 To Amos himself Amaziah said, 'Go away, seer, take yourself off to Judah, earn your living there, and there you can prophesy!

13 But never again will you prophesy at Bethel, for this is a royal sanctuary, a national temple.'

14 'I am not a prophet,' Amos replied to Amaziah, 'nor do I belong to a prophetic brotherhood. I am merely a herdsman and dresser of sycamore-figs.

15 But Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel."

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

9 His saving help is near for those who fear him, his glory will dwell in our land.

10 Faithful Love and Loyalty join together, Saving Justice and Peace embrace.

11 Loyalty will spring up from the earth, and Justice will lean down from heaven.

12 Yahweh will himself give prosperity, and our soil will yield its harvest.

13 Justice will walk before him, treading out a path.

Reading 2, Ephesians 1:3-14

3 Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.

4 Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made to be holy and faultless before him in love,

5 marking us out for himself beforehand, to be adopted sons, through Jesus Christ. Such was his purpose and good pleasure,



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6 to the praise of the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved,

7 in whom, through his blood, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins. Such is the richness of the grace

8 which he has showered on us in all wisdom and insight.

9 He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, according to his good pleasure which he determined beforehand in Christ,

10 for him to act upon when the times had run their course: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth.

11 And it is in him that we have received our heritage, marked out beforehand as we were, under the plan of the One who guides all things as he decides by his own will,

12 chosen to be, for the praise of his glory, the people who would put their hopes in Christ before he came.

13 Now you too, in him, have heard the message of the truth and the gospel of your salvation, and having put your trust in it you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise,

14 who is the pledge of our inheritance, for the freedom of the people whom God has taken for his own, for the praise of his glory.

Gospel, Mark 6:7-13

7 Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits.

8 And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff -- no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses.

9 They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Don't take a spare tunic.'

10 And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district.'

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11 And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust under your feet as evidence to them.'

12 So they set off to proclaim repentance;

13 and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.



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Questions for Reflection for July 14, 2024

1. Our first reading is taken from the Book of the Prophet Amos. Amos is one of what are called the "minor prophets" of the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament. There are twelve of these "minor prophets". The term does not reflect the lack of importance of the writings. Rather, the length of the Books.

In this excerpt from the 7th chapter of Amos, we learn something about the challenges a true prophet of the Lord encounters, as well as the opposition they so often face. People often do not want to hear the word the Lord gives the prophets to deliver. Amos delivered his prophetic messages during the reign of King Jereboam. With boldness, he spoke out against the leadership of the Northern Kingdom, Judah. This was to the chagrin of others who, while purporting to be prophets, were praising the same leadership and uttering false prophecies. Thus, he faced opposition from within.

The message of the Book, in a general sense, is if God's people turn away from Him - Judgement results.

He expresses this dynamic in his prophecies, and it is reinforced in the visions given to Him which he uses to explain his message. In our first reading, Amaziah, a priest, tells Amos to leave the land of Judah and stop speaking his prophetic words. He accuses Amos of being a false prophet because Amos is warning the King to turn away from sin and speaking of the fall of the Kingdom.

Amos responds by emphasizing an essential aspect of the call to be a prophet, a spokesperson, of the Lord. That it is a calling from the Lord and does not need the respect of men. Amos says "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets, I was a shepherd and a dresser of Sycamores. The Lord took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go prophesy to my people Israel." And he did just that. Because the Lord said it, he proclaimed it.

We have some prophets in our midst today. Sometimes their frank warnings make some, even in the leadership of the Church, uncomfortable. But they are called to warn of the consequences of turning away from the truths of the faith.

2. In our second reading, taken from the first chapter of the first letter of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, we are reminded that the Lord has "chosen us, in Him, to be holy and without blemish". In another book of a minor prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Book of Joel, the Lord promises that the day would come when He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh and "...your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..." (Joel 2:28).



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In his sermon on the day of Pentecost - after the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples, gathered with the Mother of the Lord, in the Upper Room - Peter quotes the entire prophecy of Joel and tells the crowd that it has been fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, just as Jesus promised. This marks a distinct development in the role of Prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. With the coming of the Messiah, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the prophetic role of the whole Church, the New Israel, has come.

Each one of us, when we were Baptized into Jesus Christ, were incorporated into His Mystical Body, the Church. We participate in His threefold office of "priest, prophet and king". We are called to live prophetically. We are called to speak - by both word and deed - the message of the Lord.

Yes, there are still some within the Body of Christ with special prophetic gifts (See, Corinthians 12), but all of us have been called to prophesy. Do we believe this? Are we living a prophetic life? Are we speaking the Truth of the Lord to a generation which has lost its way? If we do, we will face opposition and we should not be surprised when it comes.

3. The Gospel text appointed for this Holy Mass, ties this theme all together. It is taken from the 6th chapter of the Gospel of St Mark. Jesus summons the twelve and sends them out, two by two. He empowers them to preach repentance and do battle with the demons who will oppose them. He tells them to heal the sick, anointing them with oil. In short, he calls them to be His Messengers, His Ambassadors.

He still sends us out - you and me - and, by the Holy Spirit, empowers us to continue His Redemptive mission. He gives us the grace we need, His Divine Life, through the Sacraments. He gives us instructions through His written Word in the Bible and the teaching of His Church.

To be a Christian is to be a prophetic missionary, a disciple of Jesus. That is true no matter what our state in life, career, or age. How are we doing?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 15, 2024



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Daily Reading for Monday, July 15th, 2024

Reading 1, Isaiah 1:10-17

10 Hear what Yahweh says, you rulers of Sodom; listen to what our God teaches, you people of Gomorrah.

11 'What are your endless sacrifices to me?' says Yahweh. 'I am sick of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of calves. I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

12 When you come and present yourselves before me, who has asked you to trample through my courts?

13 Bring no more futile cereal offerings, the smoke from them fills me with disgust. New Moons, Sabbaths, assemblies -- I cannot endure solemnity combined with guilt.

14 Your New Moons and your meetings I utterly detest; to me they are a burden I am tired of bearing.

15 When you stretch out your hands I turn my eyes away. You may multiply your prayers, I shall not be listening. Your hands are covered in blood,

16 wash, make yourselves clean. Take your wrong-doing out of my sight. Cease doing evil.

17 Learn to do good, search for justice, discipline the violent, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23

8 'It is not with your sacrifices that I find fault, those burnt offerings constantly before me;

9 I will not accept any bull from your homes, nor a single goat from your folds.

16 But to the wicked, God says: 'What right have you to recite my statutes, to take my covenant on your lips,

17 when you detest my teaching, and thrust my words behind you?

21 You do this, and am I to say nothing? Do you think that I am really like you? I charge you, indict you to your face.

23 Honour to me is a sacrifice of thanksgiving; to the upright I will show God's salvation.'



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Gospel, Matthew 10:34--11:1

34 'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword.

35 For I have come to set son against father, daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law;

36 a person's enemies will be the members of his own household.

37 'No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me. No one who prefers son or daughter to me is worthy of me.

38 Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me.

39 Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.

40 'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

41 'Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes an upright person because he is upright will have the reward of an upright person.

42 'If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not go without his reward.'

1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples he moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.



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Questions for Reflection for July 15, 2024

1. In our first reading, taken from the first chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, we are given the later part of the vision the Prophet had concerning Judah and Jerusalem. So corrupted had they become, he calls them Sodom and Gomorrah. This is also a warning of what will become of them if they do not turn away from their idolatry and wickedness. They, like Sodom and Gomorrah will bring on themselves the very judgement of God. The Lord, speaking through the Prophet decries their sacrifices because their behavior, in oppressing the poor and practicing wickedness, bloodies their hands.

But notice these consoling and promising words, found after that strong rebuke, "Cease doing evil. Learn to do good, search for justice, discipline the violent, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow." In our own practice and profession of the faith, our walk and our talk must reflect one another. We need to live a unity of life.

How are we doing? If we honestly confess our sin, He is quick to forgive us. Then, we can choose again, begin again to "Cease doing evil, learn to do good".

2. In our Responsorial Psalm, the same theme is spoken by the Lord, this time through the Prophet David. The Lord asks a question: "What right have you to recite my statutes, to take my covenant on your lips, when you detest my teaching, and thrust my words behind you? You do this, and am I to say nothing? Do you think that I am really like you?"

Once again, we are invited to examine ourselves. Are we living a unity of life? Are we being morally coherent? If not, let us all to mind the words of the beloved disciple John in his first letter to the early church "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10)

3. In the Gospel for today's Mass, Jesus is teaching His apostles about the call to radical discipleship. The word "radical" is often used these days to speak of those who follow a political ideology to the extreme. But the root of the word actually means going back to the root. When we choose to follow Jesus Christ, that choice takes priority over every other plan or choice in our life.

It even reorders all of our relationships, including our family relationships. This is what it means to call Jesus Christ Lord. Remember Jesus also said, when we give up even our family for Him, we will receive them back a hundred-fold. Family is God's plan and gift. What is being stressed here is the primacy of loves. Love of God must be first. Then, it enhances, fulfills, and strengthens all other good loves. Is Jesus Christ our Lord?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 16, 2024



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, July 16th, 2024

Reading 1, Isaiah 7:1-9

1 In the reign of Ahaz son of Jotham, son of Uzziah king of Judah, Razon king of Aram advanced on Jerusalem with Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, to attack it; but he was unable to attack it.

2 The House of David was informed: 'Aram has halted in Ephraimite territory.' At this, his heart and his people's hearts shook like forest trees shaking in the wind.

3 Yahweh then said to Isaiah, 'Go out with your son Shear-Jashub, and meet Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the road to the Fuller's Field,

4 and say to him, "Pay attention and keep calm. Do not be frightened or demoralised by these two smouldering sticks of firewood, by the fierce anger of Razon, Aram and the son of Remaliah,

5 or because Aram, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have been plotting against you and saying:

6 Let us mount an attack on Judah, destroy it, force it onto our side and install the son of Tabeel there as king.

7 "Lord Yahweh says this: This will not happen, it will never occur,

8 for the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Razon; another sixty-five years, and Ephraim will cease to be a people.

9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not take your stand on me you will not stand firm." '

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 48:2-3, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

2 towering in beauty, the joy of the whole world: Mount Zion in the heart of the north, the settlement of the great king;

3 God himself among its palaces has proved himself its bulwark.

4 For look, kings made alliance, together they advanced;

5 without a second glance, when they saw, they panicked and fled away.

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6 Trembling seized them on the spot, pains like those of a woman in labour;

7 it was the east wind, that wrecker of ships from Tarshish.

8 What we had heard we saw for ourselves in the city of our God, in the city of Yahweh Sabaoth, which God has established for ever.

Gospel, Matthew 11:20-24

20 Then he began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles had been worked, because they refused to repent.

21 'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on Judgement Day than for you.

23 And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be raised as high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell. For if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have been standing yet.

24 Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on Judgement Day than for you.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 16, 2024

1. In our first reading the Prophet Isaiah is reassuring the young King Ahaz, who, at the time, ruled Judah, that the Lord would protect him and Judah against the Syrians. In the verses which immediately follow the ones we heard, the Prophet tells the King that the Lord will give Israel a sign of his ultimate deliverance, that a Virgin would conceive and bear a son and call His name Immanuel, which means God is with us. (Isaiah 7:10-14).

The Lord fulfilled his promise, protecting Judah from Assyria. And, as Christians, we know that the prophecy of Isaiah of the Virgin conceiving a Son was fulfilled through the Eyes of Mary and the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. But sadly, Ahaz went on to become an evil King. However, the Lord remained faithful to His promises to His people and His plan of salvation.

When we hear these readings, we hear of the history of Gods plan of salvation. The Virgin did conceive and the Savior, not only of Israel, but of the whole world, was born. We also hear in these readings, if we listen, warnings about the dangers of our own response to God. The Lord has made promises to the Church, the New Israel, and to each one of us. How we respond matters.

2. In the 48th Psalm, David sings of the Glory and Strength of Zion. In the portion we chant as our Response he sings of Zion as "towering in beauty, the joy of the whole world: Mount Zion in the heart of the north, the settlement of the great king;" Who is that great King? The great King is Jesus, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. He has come and established His Church as a seed of the Kingdom to come. He is in her midst. Do we believe that? If so, we should rejoice every day.
3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass, an excerpt from the 11th chapter of Matthews Gospel, Jesus upbraids two cities on the on the Northshore of Lake Gennesearet, not far from Caparneum, for their lack of faith. "Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on Judgement Day than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be raised as high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell. For if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have been standing yet. Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on Judgement Day than for you." They had witnessed so many miracles, yet they refused to repent, turn from their sin, and recognize Jesus for who He is, the promised Messiah. We have experienced so many graces and miracles in our own lives.

How are we responding? Who is Jesus to us?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 17, 2024



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, July 17th, 2024

Reading 1, Isaiah 10:5-7, 13-16

5 Woe to Assyria, rod of my anger, the club in their hands is my fury!

6 I was sending him against a godless nation, commissioning him against the people who enraged me, to pillage and plunder at will and trample on them like the mud in the streets.

7 But this was not his intention nor did his heart plan it so, for he dreamed of putting an end to them, of liquidating nations without number!

13 For he thinks: 'By the strength of my own arm I have done this and by my own wisdom: how intelligent I have been! I have abolished the frontiers between peoples, I have plundered their treasures, like a hero, I have subjugated their inhabitants.

14 My hand has found, as though a bird's nest, the riches of the peoples. Like someone collecting deserted eggs, I have collected the whole world while no one has fluttered a wing or opened a beak to squawk.'

15 Does the axe claim more credit than the man who wields it, or the saw more strength than the man who handles it? As though a staff controlled those who raise it, or the club could raise what is not made of wood!

16 That is why Yahweh Sabaoth is going to inflict leanness on his stout men, and beneath his glory kindle a fever burning like a fire.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 94:5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 14-15

5 They crush your people, Yahweh, they oppress your heritage,

6 they murder the widow and the stranger, bring the orphan to a violent death.

7 They say, 'Yahweh is not looking, the God of Jacob is taking no notice.'

8 Take notice yourselves, you coarsest of people! Fools, when will you learn some sense?

9 Shall he who implanted the ear not hear, he who fashioned the eye not see?

10 Shall he who instructs nations not punish? Yahweh, the teacher of all people,

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14 Yahweh will not abandon his people, he will not desert his heritage;

15 for judgement will again become saving justice, and in its wake all upright hearts will follow.

Gospel, Matthew 11:25-27

25 At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children.

26 Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do.

27 Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.



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Questions for Reflection for July 17, 2024

1. The passages we heard proclaimed in our first reading were excerpted from the 10th chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. The Lord is imposing judgment on the oppressors of His people, who are actually found in the very midst of His people. Through these words of His Prophet, he revealed His plan. He used a pagan Nation, Assyria, to render judgement against the infidelity of Judah. Then, he promised to reap judgment upon Assyria.

One of the important things to realize as we read the history of Gods plan of salvation in the Hebrew Scriptures, is His plan of raising up one Nation, Israel, to reveal Himself to all the Nations, was in order to reach all the Nations through her. It was universal. All Nations belong to the Lord, and He always wanted all men and women to be freed from the consequences of sin, that is, separation from Him.

In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, first to the lost sheep of the House of Israel - and then to the "gentiles", the Nations. In Jesus Christ, this universal plan of salvation is fulfilled, through the New Israel of the Church. In our own lives, the Lord has a plan for our salvation. Sometimes he even uses people we would never expect, to speak His words to us, to correct us and to adjust our lives. Having the eyes to see His hand in all of these circumstances requires the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How we respond to such interventions is vitally important. Discerning them, and properly responding to them, requires that we pray and stay very close to the Lord.

How are we doing?

2. David the Psalmist, in our Responsorial Psalm for today's Mass, which consists of select verses taken from Psalm 94, keeps the theme of our first reading. God, he reminds us, is the avenger of the righteous. No matter how much they boast, the wicked will never prevail. The Psalmist writes "Yahweh will not abandon his people, he will not desert his heritage; for judgement will again become saving justice, and in its wake all upright hearts will follow." God is for us. God is for you. Do we really believe this? We should. We can.
3. In this beautiful but short Gospel reading from the 11th chapter of St. Matthew, Jesus is rejoicing before His Father and exclaims "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children." Whenever I read or hear these words, I smile, and I sense the joy in the Lord's heart. Jesus often refers to children in His efforts to help us grow in our trust and faith in the Lord's plan in our own lives. But, for us to see it and walk in it, we need to become childlike.



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The joy and trust of a child is evident, especially when they know the love of their Father and Mother. We are called to be children of God, no matter what our chronological age. We have a Father, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who always takes care of us. And Jesus also gave us His Mother on earth, Mary, who intercedes for us. And Jesus founded the Church, as Mother and Teacher, to guide us in His Way.

In the 18th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, we read of this exchange between Jesus and the disciples: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:1-4)

Do we understand that we are children of God? We are. Do we live as though we are?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 18, 2024



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Daily Reading for Thursday, July 18th, 2024

Reading 1, Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19

7 The path of the Upright One is honesty; you smooth the honest way of the upright.

8 Following the path of your judgements, Yahweh, we set our hopes in you, your name, your memory are all our soul desires.

9 At night my soul longs for you and my spirit within me seeks you out; for when your judgements appear on earth the inhabitants of the world learn what saving justice is.

12 Yahweh, you will grant us peace, having completed all our undertakings for us.

16 Yahweh, in distress they had recourse to you, they expended themselves in prayer, since your punishment was on them.

17 As a pregnant woman near her time of delivery writhes and cries out in her pangs, so have we been, Yahweh, in your eyes:

18 we have been pregnant, we have writhed, but we have given birth only to wind: we have not given salvation to the earth, no inhabitants for the world have been brought to birth.

19 Your dead will come back to life, your corpses will rise again. Wake up and sing, you dwellers in the dust, for your dew will be a radiant dew, but the earth will give birth to the shades.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 102:13-14, 15, 16-18, 19-21

13 Rise up, take pity on Zion! the time has come to have mercy on her, the moment has come;

14 for your servants love her very stones, are moved to pity by her dust.

15 Then will the nations revere the name of Yahweh, and all the kings of the earth your glory;

16 when Yahweh builds Zion anew, he will be seen in his glory;

17 he will turn to hear the prayer of the destitute, and will not treat their prayer with scorn.

18 This shall be put on record for a future generation, and a people yet to be born shall praise God:



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19 Yahweh has leaned down from the heights of his sanctuary, has looked down from heaven to earth,

20 to listen to the sighing of the captive, and set free those condemned to death,

21 to proclaim the name of Yahweh in Zion, his praise in Jerusalem;

Gospel, Matthew 11:28-30

28 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.

29 Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 18, 2024

1. Our first reading for today's Holy Mass is taken from the 26th chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. It is a part of Judah's song of Praise to God and request for deliverance. A beautiful earnest prayer from a people who has repented and turned back to the Lord. The verses read to us from the ambo today are best understood in the context of the whole chapter which I highly recommend you read and pray over.

Here is the last portion:

"As a pregnant woman near her time of delivery writhes and cries out in her pangs, so have we been, Yahweh, in your eyes: we have been pregnant, we have writhed, but we have given birth only to wind: we have not given salvation to the earth, no inhabitants for the world have been brought to birth. Your dead will come back to life, your corpses will rise again. Wake up and sing, you dwellers in the dust, for your dew will be a radiant dew, but the earth will give birth to the shades."

This was the Lord's hope and reason for sending the Prophet to speak the words of warning. He wanted them to return to Him and find true freedom. This was why the Lord allowed Judah to experience the very consequences of their own choice to rebel and reject the ways of the Lord. When we sin, we make the wrong choice, and the consequences which follow are our own fault.

The way to freedom and flourishing is to honestly admit our sin, ask forgiveness and turn back to the Lord. As Catholics, we have the beautiful Sacrament of Confession, or penance, which offers us a new beginning.

How often do we avail ourselves of this wonderful gift?

2. The Psalmist David implores the Lord to have mercy on Zion in the portion of Psalm 102 which serves as our Responsorial Psalm for today's Mass. The entire Psalm is a prayer to God, the eternal King, for help. God always helps. He always "looks down from heaven". And He listens for our prayer. As David proclaims, "he will turn to hear the prayer of the destitute and will not treat their prayer with scorn."

Do we believe this? Do we pray frequently? We should. The Lord has created us for Himself, as St Augustine reminded us, "and "our hearts are restless until they rest in Him".



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3. The Gospel for today's Holy Mass is a continuation of the words of Jesus at the end of the 11th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel account. They immediately follow after yesterday's short Gospel passage where Jesus rejoices that the Father has revealed Himself, not to those who think they are learned and wise, but to children. In preaching a homily on this passage, St Augustine tells the faithful that the burden of which Jesus speaks, the burden He gives us after we surrender our own heavy burden to Him, is light. He says, "This burden is not a weight at all, it is wings to fly with".

God gives us only good. Even if it seems to come dressed in pain or struggle. The author of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews wrote "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin." (Hebrews 14:15)

When we cast our cares on the Lord, He gives us the grace, the divine life, we need. Saint Jose Maria Escriva once wrote "The great Christian revolution has been to convert pain into fruitful suffering and to turn a bad thing into something good. We have deprived the devil of this weapon; and with it we can conquer eternity."

But, as Jesus said, we must Come to Him. Not just at Mass on the weekends, but every day. Every hour. We must live our life in Him and ask Him to live His life through us.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 19, 2024



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Daily Reading for Friday, July 19th, 2024

Reading 1, Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8

1 About then, Hezekiah fell ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came and said to him, 'Yahweh says this, "Put your affairs in order, for you are going to die, you will not live." '

2 Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and addressed this prayer to Yahweh,

3 'Ah, Yahweh, remember, I beg you, that I have behaved faithfully and with sincerity of heart in your presence and done what you regard as right.' And Hezekiah shed many tears.

4 Then the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah,

5 'Go and say to Hezekiah, "Yahweh, the God of your ancestor David, says this: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I shall cure you: in three days' time you will go up to the Temple of Yahweh. I shall add fifteen years to your life.

6 I shall save you and this city from the king of Assyria's clutches and defend this city for my sake and my servant David's sake." '

7 'Here', Isaiah replied, 'is the sign from Yahweh that he will do what he has said.

8 Look, I shall make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the steps -- the steps to Ahaz's roof-room-go back ten steps.' And the sun went back the ten steps by which it had declined.

21 'Bring a fig poultice,' Isaiah said, 'apply it to the ulcer and he will recover.'

22 Hezekiah said, 'What is the sign to tell me that I shall be going up to the Temple of Yahweh?'

Responsorial Psalm, Isaiah 38:10, 11, 12, 16

10 I thought: In the noon of my life I am to depart. At the gates of Sheol I shall be held for the rest of my days.

11 I thought: I shall never see Yahweh again in the land of the living, I shall never see again a single one of those who live on earth.

12 My home has been pulled up, and thrown away like a shepherd's tent; like a weaver, I have rolled up my life, he has cut me from the loom. From dawn to dark, you have been making an end of me;

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16 The Lord is over them; they live, and everything in them lives by his spirit. You will cure me. Restore me to life.

Gospel, Matthew 12:1-8

1 At that time Jesus went through the cornfields one Sabbath day. His disciples were hungry and began to pick ears of corn and eat them.

2 The Pharisees noticed it and said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing something that is forbidden on the Sabbath.'

3 But he said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he and his followers were hungry-

4 how he went into the house of God and they ate the loaves of the offering although neither he nor his followers were permitted to eat them, but only the priests?

5 Or again, have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath day the Temple priests break the Sabbath without committing any fault?

6 Now here, I tell you, is something greater than the Temple.

7 And if you had understood the meaning of the words: Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the blameless.

8 For the Son of man is master of the Sabbath.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 19, 2024

1. Our Hezekiah, the King of Judah was seriously ill. In our first reading we have a portion of the full story which is found in the 38th chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. As is sometimes the case, our readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament, are sometimes only portions of the text. Also, they are sometimes set in a different sequence than they are in the text. Partly, that is to assist us in understanding the applicable spiritual application for our own lives. But I strongly recommend to those listening and viewing, take the time to read the entire chapter. That will give you the literal interpretation of the passage, from which all interpretations should flow, according to Catholic teaching.

The Catholic Catechism speaks of the "senses" of Scripture in Paragraphs 115 - 119. Read it this week. It is truly helpful. We will consider what the Church teaching calls the "spiritual sense" of these passages.

The Prophet Isaiah told the King he was going to die and to put his affairs in order. WOW. How would we respond to such a word from a messenger of the Lord?

Listen to how Hezekiah responded:

"Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and addressed this prayer to Yahweh, 'Ah, Yahweh, remember, I beg you, that I have behaved faithfully and with sincerity of heart in your presence and done what you regard as right.' And Hezekiah shed many tears. "The tenderness of the King's heart led him to sincere prayer.

This is the lesson we can learn from the "spiritual sense" of these passages. When we face difficult news, even life and death news, turn to the Lord, in earnest and heartfelt prayer. He always hears us. In this instance, he even extended the life of the King. What a wonderful God we serve.

2. The Responsorial Psalm continues the theme. David reflects on his own mortality. He is in a tough place. He even feels, perhaps, abandoned by the Lord. But he does not give in to his feelings. Rather, he rebounds by appealing to the Lord and acting in faith. Hear the final words as he reflects on his trials and oppositions.

"The Lord is over them; they live, and everything in them lives by his spirit. You will cure me. Restore me to life."

How do we respond to serious struggle? Faith is the victory!



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3. The Gospel for today's Holy Mass is a continuation of the words of Jesus at the end of the 11th chapter of St Matthews Gospel account. They immediately follow after yesterday's short Gospel passage where Jesus rejoices that the Father has revealed Himself, not to those who think they are learned and wise, but to children. In preaching a homily on this passage, St Augustine tells the faithful that the burden of which Jesus speaks, the burden He gives us after we surrender our own heavy burden to Him, is light. He says, "This burden is not a weight at all, it is wings to fly with".

God gives us only good. Even if it seems to come dressed in pain or struggle. The author of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews wrote "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin." (Hebrews 14:15)

When we cast our cares on the Lord, He gives us the grace, the divine life, we need. Saint Jose Maria Escriva once wrote "The great Christian revolution has been to convert pain into fruitful suffering and to turn a bad thing into something good. We have deprived the devil of this weapon; and with it we can conquer eternity."

But, as Jesus said, we must Come to Him. Not just at Mass on the weekends, but every day. Every hour. We must live our life in Him and ask Him to live His life through us.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 20, 2024



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Daily Reading for Saturday, July 20th, 2024

Reading 1, Micah 2:1-5

1 Disaster for those who plot evil, who lie in bed planning mischief! No sooner is it dawn than they do it, since they have the power to do so.

2 Seizing the fields that they covet, they take over houses as well, owner and house they seize alike, the man himself as well as his inheritance.

3 So Yahweh says this: Look, I am now plotting a disaster for this breed from which you will not extricate your necks; you will not hold your heads up then, for the times will be disastrous indeed.

4 That day they will make a satire on you, they will strike up a dirge and say, 'We have been stripped of everything; my people's land has been divided up, no one else can restore it to them, our fields have been awarded to our despoiler.'

5 Because of this, you will have no one to measure out a share in Yahweh's community.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 10:1-2, 3-4, 7-8, 14

1 Why, Yahweh, do you keep so distant, stay hidden in times of trouble?

2 In his pride the wicked hunts down the weak, who is caught in the schemes he devises.

3 The wicked is proud of his inmost desires, by his blasphemies the grasping spurns Yahweh,

4 the wicked in his arrogance does not look very far; 'There is no God,' is his only thought.

7 he wishes it on others. His speech is full of lies and browbeating, under his tongue lurk spite and wickedness.

8 In the undergrowth he lies in ambush, in his hiding-place he murders the innocent. He watches intently for the downtrodden,

14 You have seen for yourself the trouble and vexation, you watch so as to take it in hand. The oppressed relies on you; you are the only recourse of the orphan.



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Gospel, Matthew 12:14-21

14 At this the Pharisees went out and began to plot against him, discussing how to destroy him.

15 Jesus knew this and withdrew from the district. Many followed him and he cured them all

16 but warned them not to make him known.

17 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

18 Look! My servant whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul delights, I will send my Spirit upon him, and he will present judgement to the nations;

19 he will not brawl or cry out, his voice is not heard in the streets,

20 he will not break the crushed reed, or snuff the faltering wick,

21 until he has made judgement victorious; in him the nations will put their hope.



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Questions for Reflection for July 20, 2024

1. Our first reading is taken from the Book of the Prophet Micah. The Book is the sixth of the twelve "minor" prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos and Hosea. Again, the adjective "minor" does not refer to the importance of the book. Rather, to the relatively shortness of its content. There are only seven chapters. Micah also engaged in his prophetic ministry during the reign of Hezekiah. Like the others, he called the people of Judah to repentance.

In the second chapter, from which our excerpt is derived, the Lord, through Micah, is denouncing the evil acts which the people had committed, yet also promising to gather a remnant from among them whom He will lead.

As we face the current crisis in the Church, which is the New Israel, we can learn from these accounts of the Lords dealing with Israel several important lessons. One, that the falling away of Gods people, and His leaders, is not a new story. Sadly, sin corrupts. Second, that the Lord will Never abandon His Church, as He never abandoned Israel. And, perhaps most importantly, we are called to stay faithful.

How are we doing?

2. The verses which make up our Responsorial Psalm are taken from Psalm ten. In this Psalm, David is praying for deliverance from his enemies. Yet, to Him, it seems as though the Lord is far off, as if He is not hearing him. Sound familiar? We often experience the same thing. But here is a lesson to be learned. If we simply read down a few verses we would hear David's words in verse 17 "O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear..."

God ALWAYS hears our prayer, whether we feel like he does or not. Living faith perseveres. The very next Psalm, Psalm 11, is a Song of Trust in God.

3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass, we continue from yesterday's reading, but skip over verses 9-13. Remember, the Pharisees were so hardhearted, they had lost the very meaning of the Sabbath. Jesus responds by telling them He is Lord of the Sabbath. Then, in verses 9-13, he heals a man with a withered hand.

How do these hard-hearted observers respond to this miracle? Listen to the words of the Bible "At this the Pharisees went out and began to plot against him, discussing how to destroy him."



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So, Jesus withdraws from the district, but continues to heal and to manifest the Kingdom of God. And this fulfills a portion of the Prophecy of Isaiah. He is the servant Messiah whom the Nations will put their hope in.

Have we placed our hope in Jesus Christ?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 21, 2024



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Daily Reading for Sunday, July 21st, 2024

Reading 1, Jeremiah 23:1-16

1 'Disaster for the shepherds who lose and scatter the sheep of my pasture, Yahweh declares.

2 This, therefore, is what Yahweh, God of Israel, says about the shepherds who shepherd my people, "You have scattered my flock, you have driven them away and have not taken care of them. Right, I shall take care of you for your misdeeds, Yahweh declares!

3 But the remnant of my flock I myself shall gather from all the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; they will be fruitful and increase in numbers.

4 For them I shall raise up shepherds to shepherd them and pasture them. No fear, no terror for them any more; not one shall be lost, Yahweh declares!

5 Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall raise an upright Branch for David; he will reign as king and be wise, doing what is just and upright in the country.

6 In his days Judah will triumph and Israel live in safety. And this is the name he will be called, 'Yahweh-is-our-Saving-Justice.' "

7 'So, look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when people will no longer say, "As Yahweh lives who brought the Israelites out of Egypt,"

8 but, "As Yahweh lives who led back and brought home the offspring of the House of Israel from the land of the north and all the countries to which he had driven them, to live on their own soil." '

9 On the prophets. My heart is broken within me, I tremble in all my bones; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome with wine, because of Yahweh and his holy words:

10 'For the country is full of adulterers; yes, because of a curse, the country is in mourning and the pasturage in the desert has dried up; they are prompt to do wrong, make no effort to do right.

11 Yes, even prophet and priest are godless, I have detected their wickedness in my own House, Yahweh declares.



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12 Because of this, their way will prove treacherous going for them; in the darkness where they are driven, there they will fall. For I shall bring disaster on them, when the year for punishing them comes, Yahweh declares.

13 'In the prophets of Samaria I have seen insanity: they prophesied in the name of Baal and led my people Israel astray.

14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: adultery, persistent lying, such abetting of the wicked that no one renounces his wickedness. To me they are all like Sodom and its inhabitants are like Gomorrah.

15 So this is what Yahweh Sabaoth says about the prophets, "Now I shall give them wormwood to eat and make them drink poisoned water, since from the prophets of Jerusalem godlessness has spread throughout the land."

16 'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "Do not listen to what those prophets prophesy to you; they are deluding you, they retail visions of their own, and not what comes from Yahweh's mouth.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 23:1-3, 3-4, 5, 6

1 [Psalm Of David] Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me

3 to restore my spirit. He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits his name.

4 Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death I should fear no danger, for you are at my side. Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

5 You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup brims over.

6 Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life. I make my home in the house of Yahweh for all time to come.



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Reading 2, Ephesians 2:13-18

13 But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far off have been brought close, by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one entity and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, by destroying in his own person the hostility,

15 that is, the Law of commandments with its decrees. His purpose in this was, by restoring peace, to create a single New Man out of the two of them,

16 and through the cross, to reconcile them both to God in one Body; in his own person he killed the hostility.

17 He came to bring the good news of peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

18 Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit have free access to the Father.

Gospel, Mark 6:30-34

30 The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught.

31 And he said to them, 'Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that there was no time for them even to eat.

32 So they went off in the boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves.

33 But people saw them going, and many recognised them; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them.

34 So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

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Questions for Reflection for July 21, 2024

1. In our first reading, from the 23rd chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the Lord speaks through His prophet to the Shepherds, the leaders of His people, who were NOT caring for the flock entrusted to them with His own compassion, tender mercy, and love. He says "...you have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds."

When the Lord raises up Shepherds and entrusts His flock to their care, He is serious. How they respond has consequences.

The Lord Himself is the Good Shepherd and He promises to gather His remnant and bring them back. Then, to appoint shepherds who will care for them.

How will He do this? By raising up a King, the Messiah, the Good Shepherd from the lineage of David. As Christians, we know that promise was, and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So, in our responsorial Psalm, we join the Prophet and Psalmist David in that beautiful 23d Psalm. "The Lord is my Shepherd..."

2. In our second reading, we heard a part of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In this letter to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul addressed divisions within the early Church between Jewish and gentile followers of Jesus Christ. His words speak an important message to us in this new missionary age in which we live. Whole Nations which were formerly Christian, have turned away from God. As Christians, we are called to bring the liberating message of the Gospel to a broken world waiting to be reborn. Yet, as Christians, we are also divided, broken and at odds with one another. This not only impedes our effectiveness in our missionary efforts, it breaks the heart of the Lord.

Paul told the Ephesian Christians in the passage we heard today that Jesus is "our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." (Eph. 2:14, 15)

Jesus is still our peace and the path to our own reconciliation today. Jesus alone can heal our divisions and create "in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace". That is because of one indispensable truth, "through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

We live in a broken world, an age filled with men and women who are already at odds, with themselves and with one another.

However, knowingly, or unknowingly, every single man, woman, and child on the face of the planet is searching for the hope and the healing which only the living God can provide. In the words of the great bishop of Hippo, Saint Augustine, "you have made us for yourself Oh Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."



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The Lord Jesus offers that hope and healing right now. How? Through the Body of His Son, the Church, of which we are all members.

In the fourth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul issued a plea, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He reminded them, in the midst of their own divisions, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."

3. In the Gospel appointed for this Sunday Mass, the Evangelist St. Mark tells us that after the Apostles had returned from their first missionary journey and gathered with this Good Shepherd, Jesus, the Christ, the Promised Messiah. He invites them to come away for a while and rest. He Himself is the "Living Water", the "restful waters" which we heard in the 23d Psalm.

Throughout the biblical accounts of the earthly ministry and life of Jesus discover, in his Sacred Humanity, the path to finding true rest. Being in His company. Living our lives for Him. Allowing Him to live in us, and to live His Life through us.

He was regularly in prayer. He lived in a continual communion with the Father. He now gives us the grace we need to live in the very same way.

The prayer of Jesus opened the heavens, brought provision to the hungry, gave Him clarity for making decisions and brought the glory of heaven to earth. Prayer still does all of this, and more, for those who will learn to live their lives immersed in God and decide to study in its classroom.

I am frequently asked what I think is the greatest need in the Church today. Because of my work, people presume how I will answer. They expect me to be what they perceive to be action oriented. My answer is simple. "The greatest need in the Church today is people who pray", I respond.

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was a close friend and confidante of St. Josemaria Escriva. Like his friend, the bishop was a man of true holiness, the kind only formed through living in an intimate communion with the Lord. A man who knew how to rest in the Lord. He once wrote:

"The so-called "practical people" are not really the most useful in the service of Christ's Church, nor are those who merely expound theories. Rather it is the true contemplatives who best serve her; those with the steady, generous and passionate desire of transfiguring and divinizing all creation with Christ and in Christ. It may sound paradoxical, but in the Church of Jesus Christ, the mystic is the only practical person."



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 22, 2024



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Daily Reading for Monday, July 22nd, 2024

Reading 1, Second Corinthians 5:14-17

14 For the love of Christ overwhelms us when we consider that if one man died for all, then all have died;

15 his purpose in dying for all humanity was that those who live should live not any more for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life.

16 From now onwards, then, we will not consider anyone by human standards: even if we were once familiar with Christ according to human standards, we do not know him in that way any longer.

17 So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone and a new being is there to see.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

2 Thus I have gazed on you in the sanctuary, seeing your power and your glory.

3 Better your faithful love than life itself; my lips will praise you.

4 Thus I will bless you all my life, in your name lift up my hands.

5 All my longings fulfilled as with fat and rich foods, a song of joy on my lips and praise in my mouth.

6 On my bed when I think of you, I muse on you in the watches of the night,

8 my heart clings to you, your right hand supports me.

9 May those who are hounding me to death go down to the depths of the earth,

Gospel, John 20:1-2, 11-18

1 It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb

2 and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him.'



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11 But Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, as she wept, she stooped to look inside,

12 and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet.

13 They said, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she replied, 'and I don't know where they have put him.'

14 As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not realise that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.'

16 Jesus said, 'Mary!' She turned round then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' -- which means Master.

17 Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'

18 So Mary of Magdala told the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that he had said these things to her.



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Questions for Reflection for July 22, 2024

1. Today, in the Liturgical Calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, we remember St. Mary Magdalene. What a wonderful example of the promise the Apostle Paul reminds us of in our first reading. He tells the Corinthians, and he tells us, that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has past, behold all things become new." What does it mean to be "in Christ". Jesus promised that He would come and live within us. In Johns Gospel, chapter fifteen He says, "Abide in me, and I in you" and in the first letter of the same apostle to the early Churches, he reminds us "God is love, and He who lives in love, lives in God."(1 John 4:16)

We were incorporated into the Body of Christ through our Baptism, and we grow in understanding and living that that "abiding" through prayer, scripture reading and participation in the Sacraments of the Church, most especially the Most Holy Eucharist, where the Lord comes and takes up residence with us. Do we regularly pray? Do we regularly invite the Lord to come and live within us? Do we regularly participate in Holy Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist?

Like Mary Magdalene, we are all invited to become new creations in Christ. But the invitation calls for a constant response of living faith.

2. David understood what it means to abide, to live, in the Lord. His prayer and praise, the Psalms, are a manual of prayer. This is why they are such a vital part of the Liturgical life of the Church. Repeat these wonderful words of praise with me "...my lips will praise you. Thus, I will bless you all my life, in your name lift up my hands. All my longings fulfilled as with fat and rich foods, a song of joy on my lips and praise in my mouth."

Now, even more importantly, make them your own. Lift up your hands and your hearts in prayer and praises daily. Do so out loud. OK, when no-one is around. But even if they are. We have so much to be grateful for. Begin each day in praise and thanksgiving. End each night, the same way. David writes: "On my bed when I think of you, I muse on you in the watches of the night, my heart clings to you, your right hand supports me." Is that how we end our day? It can be. It will change everything!

3. In our Gospel text on this day, when we remember Mary Magdalene, we see that she is a witness to the Resurrection. She finds the empty tomb. She is one of the first to find the empty tomb - and to believe in the Resurrection. One of the first disciples and witnesses to the Resurrection in the Last Gospel, the Gospel of St. John.

She also encounters Jesus, even though at first, she does not recognize Him. It is only when the Risen Jesus calls her name that she recognizes Him as "Rabboni", Teacher.

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Every one of us is called to encounter Jesus. And, not just once, but continually. After all, that is the heart of the Gospel message. Christianity is about encountering a Divine Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior, our Savior. And, in that encounter, we are changed. That change is to continue and lead to a life, a lifestyle, of ongoing encounter and ongoing conversion.

How are we doing? Are we coming to know Jesus? Or do we know "about" Jesus?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 23, 2024



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, July 23rd, 2024

Reading 1, Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

14 With shepherd's crook lead your people to pasture, the flock that is your heritage, living confined in a forest with meadow land all round. Let them graze in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old!

15 As in the days when you came out of Egypt, grant us to see wonders!

18 What god can compare with you for pardoning guilt and for overlooking crime? He does not harbour anger for ever, since he delights in showing faithful love.

19 Once more have pity on us, tread down our faults; throw all our sins to the bottom of the sea.

20 Grant Jacob your faithfulness, and Abraham your faithful love, as you swore to our ancestors from the days of long ago.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 85:2-4, 5-6, 7-8

2 you take away the guilt of your people, you blot out all their sin.

3 You retract all your anger, you renounce the heat of your fury.

4 Bring us back, God our Saviour, appease your indignation against us!

5 Will you be angry with us for ever? Will you prolong your wrath age after age?

6 Will you not give us life again, for your people to rejoice in you?

7 Show us, Lord, your faithful love, grant us your saving help.

8 I am listening. What is God's message? Yahweh's message is peace for his people, for his faithful, if only they renounce their folly.

Gospel, Matthew 12:46-50

46 He was still speaking to the crowds when suddenly his mother and his brothers were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him.

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47 Someone said to him: Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to speak to you.

48 But to the man who told him this Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?'

49 And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers.

50 Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 23, 2024

1. In our first reading from the Prophet Micah we are reminded of the wonderful mercy and goodness of God. Here these words of the Prophet "What god can compare with you for pardoning guilt and for overlooking crime? He does not harbor anger forever, since he delights in showing faithful love. Once more have pity on us, tread down our faults; throw all our sins to the bottom of the sea."

The Lord does not want us to be bound up by sin. He wants us to be free from sin. As Christians, we know that the most profound demonstration of His Mercy was the fact that He sent His Son Jesus, to pay the penalty for our sin and free us from death. Free us for a new life.

2. The Psalmist David continues this message of mercy, inviting us to join in his song. "you take away the guilt of your people, you blot out all their sin. You retract all your anger; you renounce the heat of your fury. Bring us back, God our Savior, appease your indignation against us!"
3. As one who teaches and preaches in the Catholic Church and the broader Christian community, I am often asked about whether Jesus had brothers and sisters. If by that question is meant natural or blood relatives, the text and the unbroken Christian tradition make the answer clear - No. Failure to consider the original language of the text has led to a mistaken notion of the possibility of Jesus having brothers in his natural family. The reality is that the word used for extended family, a vital part of the Jewish understanding of family, is not accurately translated. But the passage we hear from Matthews Gospel today has a much deeper meaning.

I stand with the ancient Christian tradition, rooted in what is called the Patristic literature (writings of the early Church fathers) as to what is being revealed through these words - and in this encounter. Understood in this light, this passage reveals a framework for an authentically human and relational spirituality, a spirituality of communion. We are made members of the very family of God through Jesus Christ and His saving Incarnation. We are his mothers, brothers and sisters, as we live His Word and walk in His Way.

Through our Baptism, we are all invited into the very family of God. When we choose to be obedient to the will and the Word of God; we enter into an eternal relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We actually become a part of the "family" of God; we become "mother" sister" and "brother" to the Lord Jesus. We enter into "communion" with the Trinitarian God, through Him.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 24, 2024



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, July 24th, 2024

Reading 1, Jeremiah 1:1, 4-10

1 The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests living at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin.

4 The word of Yahweh came to me, saying:

5 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations.'

6 I then said, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child!'

7 But Yahweh replied, 'Do not say, "I am only a child," for you must go to all to whom I send you and say whatever I command you.

8 Do not be afraid of confronting them, for I am with you to rescue you, Yahweh declares.'

9 Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me: 'There! I have put my words into your mouth.

10 Look, today I have set you over the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15, 17

1 In you, Yahweh, I take refuge, I shall never be put to shame.

2 In your saving justice rescue me, deliver me, listen to me and save me.

3 Be a sheltering rock for me, always accessible; you have determined to save me, for you are my rock, my fortress.

4 My God, rescue me from the clutches of the wicked, from the grasp of the rogue and the ruthless.

5 For you are my hope, Lord, my trust, Yahweh, since boyhood.



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6 On you I have relied since my birth, since my mother's womb you have been my portion, the constant theme of my praise.

15 My lips shall proclaim your saving justice, your saving power all day long.

17 God, you have taught me from boyhood, and I am still proclaiming your marvels.

Gospel, Matthew 13:1-9

1 That same day, Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside,

2 but such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the shore,

3 and he told them many things in parables. He said, 'Listen, a sower went out to sow.

4 As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up.

5 Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up at once, because there was no depth of earth;

6 but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away.

7 Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

8 Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

9 Anyone who has ears should listen!'



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Questions for Reflection for July 24, 2024

1. Our first reading was an excerpt from the calling of the great Hebrew Prophet Jeremiah. It speaks powerfully, in many ways, to each of us as well. First, it is profoundly PRO-LIFE!

The Lord says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."

So, it is with each one of us. God called us and formed us in our mother's womb. Every single child in the womb is created in the Image of God and has been called by Him. This is one more reason why every procured abortion is so evil.

Next, notice the Prophets reluctance to respond to the Lord's call 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child!' But Yahweh replied, 'Do not say, "I am only a child," for you must go to all to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of confronting them, for I am with you to rescue you, Yahweh declares.'

The Lord has called each one of us to speak for Him in this age. We need to put all of our excuses aside and do it. It is the Lord who will speak through us. When we do put aside our excuses and our fears and speak for the Lord and about the Lord to others, we will come to more fully understand the words of the Psalmist David which we chanted or recited at Holy Mass today.

2. In the midst of all of his own personal struggles, and his failures, David took refuge in the Lord. He was a man of deep prayer, and he derived his strength from that intimate communion with the Lord. We are called to do the same. I remember when I was a young man, I drove by a gas station which had a sign out front. It said, "Seven Days without prayer makes one - "WEAK". It indeed does. Prayer is not an option for a believer, it is like breathing air to our physical bodies. Are we praying regularly? If not, our spiritual life will die. If not, it is time to begin.
3. The Gospel appointed for today is the parable of the Sower and the seed as recorded by St. Matthew.

Jesus drew his examples from the lived experience of those who followed him during his public ministry. Those early disciples were used to the pattern of preparing the soil in the fields, planting the seed, and reaping the crops.

It has taken me many years to even begin to grasp the meaning. That is partly because I grew up in the inner City of Boston. However, I called beautiful Southeastern Virginia home for much of my adult life. We had a lot of beautiful fields around the parish I served.

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The meaning of the agrarian parables that Jesus used became increasingly clear as I watched those fields become green every Spring. Of course, preceding all of this, they were barren looking fields, seemingly lifeless before the seed was sown.

Preparing the ground for the seed involves hard work, cooperative weather and the goodness of the God who created this beautiful and fruitful world. I have come to understand the work that is involved in cultivating the soil, selecting, and sowing the seed and then praying for cooperative weather while caring for the nascent crops. This happened to me vicariously; through the farmers I served in my years of ministry back then. My admiration for their work has grown immensely.

So too has my gratitude for the goodness and grace of the God the Creator and Father who loves us all so much that He sent His Son to save us and make us new.

He has also sown the seed of His Word and His Kingdom within each one of us. The results also invite our response, our free choice. Whether that seed will find ripe soil is certainly affected by our willing cooperation with His grace.

As we choose to respond to that grace, and surrender ourselves to his care, formation, and assignment in the fields of the world, our life changes, and so do we. We become His Seed, sown into the fields of the world to bring men and women to Him.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 25, 2024



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Daily Reading for Thursday, July 25th, 2024

Reading 1, Second Corinthians 4:7-15

7 But we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own.

8 We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but never distressed; we see no way out but we never despair;

9 we are pursued but never cut off; knocked down, but still have some life in us;

10 always we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our body.

11 Indeed, while we are still alive, we are continually being handed over to death, for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our mortal flesh.

12 In us, then, death is at work; in you, life.

13 But as we have the same spirit of faith as is described in scripture -- I believed and therefore I spoke - we, too, believe and therefore we, too, speak,

14 realising that he who raised up the Lord Jesus will raise us up with Jesus in our turn, and bring us to himself -- and you as well.

15 You see, everything is for your benefit, so that as grace spreads, so, to the glory of God, thanksgiving may also overflow among more and more people.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

1 [Song of Ascents] When Yahweh brought back Zion's captives we lived in a dream;

2 then our mouths filled with laughter, and our lips with song. Then the nations kept saying, 'What great deeds Yahweh has done for them!'

3 Yes, Yahweh did great deeds for us, and we were overjoyed.

4 Bring back, Yahweh, our people from captivity like torrents in the Negeb!

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5 Those who sow in tears sing as they reap.

6 He went off, went off weeping, carrying the seed. He comes back, comes back singing, bringing in his sheaves.

Gospel, Matthew 20:20-28

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came with her sons to make a request of him, and bowed low;

21 and he said to her, 'What is it you want?' She said to him, 'Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom.'

22 Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?' They replied, 'We can.'

23 He said to them, 'Very well; you shall drink my cup, but as for seats at my right hand and my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father.'

24 When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers.

25 But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the gentiles the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt.

26 Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant,

27 and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave,

28 just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 25, 2024

1. July 25th is the Feast of St. James in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. All of our readings point us to the truth concerning our own human frailty and the Divine call given to us through Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth, and all of us who hear his words proclaimed today, that we all hold the treasure of faith, the presence of the Lord, in our own weak, "earthen vessels".

I have discovered that the older I get the less I know and the more imperfections I discover in myself. As a younger man, I labored under a misconception that living the Christian life would somehow get easier as I - figured it all out. Well, nothing could be further from the truth.

There is, in fact, a reverse reality at work. I am more and more aware of my own weaknesses as I age and have only just begun to understand the honest admission of St. Paul to the young disciple Timothy that he was "the chief among sinners"(1 Tim. 1:15). This honest admission of Paul did not reflect some kind of poor self-image.

To the contrary, it revealed the mature self-awareness and humility of a Christian man who had come to understand why we call God's redemptive work in our lives amazing grace. Classical Christian theology speaks of the ongoing struggle we will face as we try to live a faithful Christian life. We constantly need a Savior precisely because we are Earthen Vessels.

Yet, the Lord in His infinite mercy and love has made our own weakness and frailties become the path to a deepening relationship with Him. They are the door to our own progress in our baptismal call to holiness. This process of being emptied of self and filled with His life happens by grace. However, that wonderful free gift invites our continual response, our cooperation, with His loving plan.

St. Francis DeSales (1567-1610) was a great pastor of souls. He once wrote in a letter to one of the many who sought his holy counsel "God wants your misery to be the throne of His mercy. He desires that your powerlessness be the seat of His omnipotence."

2. Like the captives of Zion whom the Psalmist sings about in the Response for today's Liturgy, we have been chosen by the Lord. Yes, even in our weakness. We have been delivered from the captivity of sin, and given the joy of the Lord, the kind of joy that comes from knowing that God loves us and is making us new creations, in and through His Son Jesus Christ.

Just as the Apostle Paul reminded us in our first reading, the reality of our frail human nature is that we are weak; the struggles we face in our daily lives do not necessarily lessen as we age. We fall and fail. The Good News is that the Lord is always there, ready to forgive, to heal and to



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help us to get back up and, with the help of His grace, begin again and again and again. In another letter to a pilgrim seeking his spiritual counsel, Francis DeSales wrote:

"Be patient with the whole world, but, above all with yourself. I want to tell you not to lose your serenity because of your imperfections, and always to have the zest to raise yourself up. It gives me joy to see each day you begin again. There is no better way to finish life well than to return to the starting point always and not ever to think that we have done enough".

This is sage advice for all of who are coming to understand the truth that we hold this treasure of God's life within us, in earthen vessels.

3. The Gospel appointed for the Feast of St. James is the account found in Saint Matthew. The Saints put legs on the faith. They show us that ordinary people, just like you and I, can become extraordinary, when we cooperate with grace and allow the Holy Spirit to change us.

James was the son of Zebedee and brother of John. From faithful stock, we see in this encounter that some forms of zeal may be genetic. In fact, this zeal in both of these brothers caused the Lord to name them the Sons of Thunder. (Mk 3:14-17) However, human zeal is not sufficient to be a disciple of the Master. Like all human virtues, it must be baptized and transformed. And so it would be in James.

He followed the Lord on the way which would later be called Christianity for the first time in Antioch. (Acts 11:26) He was one of three to witness the transfiguration. He fell asleep during the great instruction which Jesus gave them in that Garden called Gethsemane.

The tradition tells us that after the Resurrection, James preached the Gospel in Spain. To this day, the pilgrimage path which bears his name is affecting conversion in the lives of many. He returned to Palestine in 44 AD and drank that chalice. He was the first Apostle to be martyred by order of the tyrant Herod Agrippa. The word martyr means witness. In both his life and his death, James was such a witness. In imitation of his life, we are also invited to follow the path of Jesus' struggle, the way of His rejection.

We too are invited to climb the mountain of His great saving act of unmerited selfless Divine love. James, indeed, all the martyrs, show us the way, the pattern, the lifestyle of surrendered love for God. They invite us to walk this way with Jesus, who, in His Sacred humanity, teaches us the path to our own transformation.

James may have missed the lesson of Gethsemane the first time around due to falling asleep, (Mt. 26) but he certainly learned to live it out in a life of discipleship The agony in that garden called Gethsemane shows us a very human Jesus and instructs each one of us.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 26, 2024



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Daily Reading for Friday, July 26th, 2024

Reading 1, Sirach 44:1, 10-15

1 Next let us praise illustrious men, our ancestors in their successive generations.

10 But here is a list of illustrious men whose good works have not been forgotten.

11 In their descendants they find a rich inheritance, their posterity.

12 Their descendants stand by the commandments and, thanks to them, so do their children's children.

13 Their offspring will last for ever, their glory will not fade.

14 Their bodies have been buried in peace, and their name lives on for all generations.

15 The peoples will proclaim their wisdom, the assembly will celebrate their praises.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 132:11, 13-14, 17-18

11 Yahweh has sworn to David, and will always remain true to his word, 'I promise that I will set a son of yours upon your throne.

13 For Yahweh has chosen Zion, he has desired it as a home.

14 'Here shall I rest for evermore, here shall I make my home as I have wished.

17 'There I shall raise up a line of descendants for David, light a lamp for my anointed;

18 I shall clothe his enemies with shame, while his own crown shall flourish.'

Gospel, Matthew 13:16-17

16 'But blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear!

17 In truth I tell you, many prophets and upright people longed to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.

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Questions for Reflection for July 26, 2024

1. Today, we reflect upon the life and witness of a holy married couple named Joachim and Ann, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the grandparents of Jesus Christ. We commemorate their faithful marriage and fruitful parenthood on their Feast Day, July 26th. They are the Patron Saints of a Happy, Faithful and Holy Marriage

The parents of the Virgin Mary, the grandparents of Jesus, are known by the names of Joachim and Ann from a tradition dating back to the Second Century as noted in the document known as the Protoevangelium of St. James.

Our first reading from the Book of Sirach reminds us that we should call to mind and praise our godly ancestors. And, in the Church, we do just that. We recall the lives of the "saints" the Holy Ones. We do so because they provide us with models to imitate.

There is an ancient story of Joachim and Ann. That story, dating to the first centuries of the Church's life, recalls how Saints Anne & Joachim, like Abraham and Sarah, were scorned by their neighbors because they had no children.

Years of longing did not weaken their trust in God, but grief eventually drove Saint Joachim into the wilderness to fast and pray. Saint Anne, remaining at home, dressed in mourning clothes and wept because she had no child of her own.

Seeing her mistress distressed, a servant girl reminded Anne to put her trust in God. Saint Anne washed her face, put on her bridal clothes and went to a garden to plead with God for a child.

Angels appeared to Saint Anne in her garden - and to Saint Joachim in the desert - promising that, despite their old age, they would give birth to a child who would be known throughout the world.

The new parents ran to meet one another at Jerusalem's Golden Gate, and with a kiss, rejoiced in the new life which God had promised would be theirs. Saints Anne and Joachim are powerful intercessors for all married couples, expectant mothers and married couples who are having difficulty conceiving, as well as all who have grown old.

This scene is depicted in a beautiful Icon which is revered by Christians around the world - and seen as a sacramental sign of the holiness of faithful and fruitful married love. Joachim and Ann are the Patron saints of all Married Couples, Parents and Grandparents.

2. Our Responsorial Psalm also calls us to remember that the Lord remains true to His Word. He promised David that He would set a descendent of his upon the throne. And we know that "son of David" was, in fact, the Son of God, the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.



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The family history reveals that the Lord worked through generations of people to fulfill that promise. The Virgin of Nazareth had a Mom and a Dad, Joachim and Ann. We can trust the Lord's promises to us as well. He is always faithful. We need the eyes of living faith to see His Hand working in our own lives, and in our families.

3. The Gospel appointed for this Feast of Joachim and Ann is short but important. It is taken from the 13th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. Jesus has just finished giving the parable of the Sower to the crowds when the disciples ask why he uses parables in addressing the crowds. He tells the disciples that the crowds did not yet have the eyes of faith to see what he is teaching - so he uses parables. However, he tells the disciples that they do have such faith, because they have seen Him and heard Him. So, He speaks directly and plainly to them.

We are His contemporary disciples. We too have seen the Lord and we hear the Lord. We see Him in the Most Holy Eucharist where He makes Himself present as our spiritual food at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We see Him in those who live their lives for Him and make Him present to us.

We hear Him as His Holy Word is proclaimed and as we read the scriptures with living faith. We hear Him as He continues to speak to us through His Mystical Body, the Church, and as we open the ears of our hearts to listen to Him speaking to us in prayer. Jesus is not dead. He is alive. He is in our midst. Do we see Him? Ask Him to open your eyes to see Him and open the ears of your heart to hear Him. And watch what begins to happen in your lives.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 27, 2024



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Daily Reading for Saturday, July 27th, 2024

Reading 1, Jeremiah 7:1-11

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying,

2 'Stand at the gate of the Temple of Yahweh and there proclaim this message. Say, "Listen to the word of Yahweh, all you of Judah who come in by these gates to worship Yahweh.

3 Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: Amend your behaviour and your actions and I will let you stay in this place.

4 Do not put your faith in delusive words, such as: This is Yahweh's sanctuary, Yahweh's sanctuary, Yahweh's sanctuary!

5 But if you really amend your behaviour and your actions, if you really treat one another fairly,

6 if you do not exploit the stranger, the orphan and the widow, if you do not shed innocent blood in this place and if you do not follow other gods, to your own ruin,

7 then I shall let you stay in this place, in the country I gave for ever to your ancestors of old.

8 Look, you are putting your faith in delusive, worthless words!

9 Steal, would you, murder, commit adultery, perjure yourselves, burn incense to Baal, follow other gods of whom you know nothing? -

10 and then come and stand before me in this Temple that bears my name, saying: Now we are safe to go on doing all these loathsome things!

11 Do you look on this Temple that bears my name as a den of bandits? I, at any rate, can see straight, Yahweh declares.



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Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 84:3, 4, 5-6, 8, 11

3 Even the sparrow has found a home, the swallow a nest to place its young: your altars, Yahweh Sabaoth, my King and my God.

4 How blessed are those who live in your house; they shall praise you continually.

5 Blessed those who find their strength in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

6 As they pass through the Valley of the Balsam, they make there a water-hole, and -- a further blessing -
- early rain fills it.

8 Yahweh, God Sabaoth, hear my prayer, listen, God of Jacob.

11 For Yahweh God is a rampart and shield, he gives grace and glory; Yahweh refuses nothing good to those whose life is blameless.

Gospel, Matthew 13:24-30

24 He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

25 While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off.

26 When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, then the darnel appeared as well.

27 The owner's labourers went to him and said, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?"

28 He said to them, "Some enemy has done this." And the labourers said, "Do you want us to go and weed it out?"

29 But he said, "No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it.

30 Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn." '



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Questions for Reflection for July 27, 2024

1. In our first reading, taken from the beginning of the 7th chapter of the Hebrew Prophet Jeremiah, the Prophet is tasked with speaking a difficult word to Israel. The Lord tells him to go and stand at the gate of the Lord's house and warn them that judgment was coming if they did not amend their ways

It was not enough to say, "trust in the temple, "trust in the temple". Rather, they needed to change the way they lived their lives.

So, it is in our own day. The Church is in a crisis of truth. A lack of living faith pervades so much of the Church. yet, people are saying something like "But, we go to Mass".

That is not enough.

We are called to live the fullness of the Catholic Christian faith and to amend our lives. But, as in the days of Jeremiah, prophetic warnings are conditional. The Lord wants us to change. He gives us the grace we need to do so. But He invites our free response.

2. Our Responsorial Psalm underscores what we just reflected on. David the Psalmist sings these words which we heard "(The Lord) is a rampart and shield, he gives grace and glory; Yahweh refuses nothing good to those whose life is blameless."

Our faith must be manifested in the way we live our lives. We are called to walk the talk.

3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass, the Mercy of God is revealed in the parable which Jesus offers. He explains that the Lord allows the good seed to grow up along with the dandel, or weeds. Why? Because He wants all men and women to be saved. But not all will be.

We were created in the Image of God. At the core of that Image is our capacity to make choices.

Freedom has consequences. The capacity to make choices is constitutive of our being human persons - and it reflects an aspect of the Imago Dei, the Image of God, present within each one of us. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote in their document on the Mission of the Church wrote these words: "Authentic freedom is an outstanding manifestation of the divine image within man." (GS #17)

This invites us to reflect upon our own lives, and our own choices. What are we choosing and who are we becoming through those choices?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 28, 2024



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Daily Reading for Sunday, July 28th, 2024

Reading 1, Second Kings 4:42-44

42 A man came from Baal-Shalishah, bringing the man of God bread from the first-fruits, twenty barley loaves and fresh grain still in the husk. 'Give it to the company to eat,' Elisha said.

43 But his servant replied, 'How can I serve this to a hundred men?' 'Give it to the company to eat,' he insisted, 'for Yahweh says this, "They will eat and have some left over." '

44 He served them; they ate and had some left over, as Yahweh had said.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18

10 All your creatures shall thank you, Yahweh, and your faithful shall bless you.

11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingship and tell of your might,

15 All look to you in hope and you feed them with the food of the season.

16 And, with generous hand, you satisfy the desires of every living creature.

17 Upright in all that he does, Yahweh acts only in faithful love.

18 He is close to all who call upon him, all who call on him from the heart.

Reading 2, Ephesians 4:1-6

1 I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you therefore to lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called.

2 With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love.

3 Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together.

4 There is one Body, one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God.

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5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 and one God and Father of all, over all, through all and within all.

Gospel, John 6:1-15

1 After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee -- or of Tiberias-

2 and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he had done in curing the sick.

3 Jesus climbed the hillside and sat down there with his disciples.

4 The time of the Jewish Passover was near.

5 Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?'

6 He said this only to put Philip to the test; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered, 'Two hundred denarii would not buy enough to give them a little piece each.'

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said,

9 'Here is a small boy with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that among so many?'

10 Jesus said to them, 'Make the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down.

11 Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were sitting there; he then did the same with the fish, distributing as much as they wanted.

12 When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing is wasted.'

13 So they picked them up and filled twelve large baskets with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves.

14 Seeing the sign that he had done, the people said, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

15 Jesus, as he realised they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, fled back to the hills alone.



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Questions for Reflection for July 28, 2024

1. In our first reading on this Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary time, we have the wonderful account of the multiplication of the bread and the ears of grain. There were only twenty loaves and some grain. But, Elisha, the prophet, was a man of faith. And he knew what the Lord could do. He had succeeded Elijah in the prophetic ministry and inherited a "double portion" of his teachers' spirit (2 Kings 2:9-12)

So, with living faith, and a prophetic promise "They shall eat and have some left", the Lord worked a miraculous sign through him, feeding 100 men.

This miracle, the multiplication of loaves, was also prophetic, as we will see in our Gospel passages appointed for today. St John's account of the multiplication of the loaves and fish by Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Lord. We join David the Psalmist in our response singing or saying, "The hand of the Lord feeds us; He answers all our needs". Do we believe this? Do we live our lives reflecting that kind of trust and living faith in God's provision? When we do, we too will see miracles.

2. St Paul, in our second reading exhorts the Ephesians to "...live in a manner worthy of the call they have received." Of course, those words, filled with the Holy Spirit are addressed to us as well. Are we living a life worthy of the call the Lord has given to us? Ordinary Time in the Liturgical Calendar is an opportunity to examine ourselves and our way of living our vocation as Christians. Ordinary time presents us with an opportunity to consider again the fact that living as a Christian, calls us to meet the Lord in the real stuff of daily life. He is already there, walking before us and beckoning us to follow after Him.

We are the ones now called to reveal the Risen Lord Jesus Christ to the world of our own age, an age that has lost its way, inebriated on self-indulgence, and blinded by the emptiness and arrogance of power. How we treat one another in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ matters greatly. How are doing? Does our life together, in the Church, bear witness to the World that Jesus Christ is Lord?

3. The Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass is St John's account of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. A wonderful miracle. The first reading foreshadowed it. John's Gospel was the last to be written. Hence, it is the most theologically deep in many ways.

St. John the theologian uses the little boy to demonstrate the condition of the heart required to enter into this part of the meaning of the miracle of the loaves. (John 6) As a child, he held nothing back. He gave his loaves and fish to the Lord with our hesitation. He simply gave what he had. Will we? Gather the Fragments, live the miracle.



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St Josemaria Escriva wrote these insightful words in The Forge:

"Our Lord wants to make us co-redeemers with him. That is why to help us understand this marvel, he moves the evangelists to tell us of so many great wonders. He could have produced bread from anything... but he doesn't! He looks for human co-operation: he needs a child, a boy, a few pieces of bread and some fish. He needs you and me: and he is God! This should move us to be generous in our corresponding with his grace.

"If you help him, even with a trifle, as the Apostles did, He is ready to work miracles; to multiply the bread, to reform wills, to give light to the most benighted minds, to enable those who have never been upright to be so, with an extraordinary grace. All this he will do... and more, if you will help him with what you have. (The Forge 674,675)

We are invited to learn to understand the loaves today. Living faith can open our eyes to see all of life differently and participate in the continuing miracle. Let's give the Lord all that we have!



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 29, 2024



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Daily Reading for Monday, July 29th, 2024

Reading 1, Jeremiah 13:1-11

1 Yahweh said this to me, 'Go and buy a linen waistcloth and put it round your waist. But do not dip it in water.'

2 And so, as Yahweh had ordered, I bought a waistcloth and put it round my waist.

3 A second time the word of Yahweh came to me,

4 'Take the waistcloth that you have bought and are wearing round your waist. Up, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a hole in the rock.'

5 So I went and hid it by the Euphrates as Yahweh had ordered me.

6 A long time later, Yahweh said to me, 'Up, go to the Euphrates and fetch the waistcloth I ordered you to hide there.'

7 So I went to the Euphrates, and I searched, and I took the waistcloth from the place where I had hidden it. And there was the waistcloth ruined, no use for anything.

8 Then the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows,

9 'Yahweh says this, "In the same way I shall ruin the pride of Judah, the immense pride of Jerusalem.

10 This evil people, these people who refuse to listen to my words, who follow their own stubborn inclinations and run after other gods, serving and worshipping them -- this people will become like this waistcloth, no good for anything.

11 For just as a waistcloth clings to a man's waist, so I made the whole House of Israel and the whole House of Judah cling to me, Yahweh declares, to be my people, my glory, my honour and my pride. But they have not listened."



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Responsorial Psalm, Deuteronomy 32:18-19, 20, 21

18 (You forget the Rock who fathered you, the God who made you, you no longer remember.)

19 Yahweh saw it and, in anger, he spurned his sons and daughters.

20 'I shall hide my face from them,' he said, 'and see what will become of them. For they are a deceitful brood, children with no loyalty in them.

21 They have roused me to jealousy with a non-god, they have exasperated me with their idols. In my turn I shall rouse them to jealousy with a non-people, I shall exasperate them with a stupid nation.

Gospel, John 11:19-27

19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.

20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house.

21 Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died,

22 but even now I know that God will grant whatever you ask of him.'

23 Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

24 Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.'

25 Jesus said: I am the resurrection. Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, will live,

26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

27 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'



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Questions for Reflection for July 29, 2024

1. In our first reading the Lord tells Jeremiah to put on a waistcloth, then remove it and hide it in a hole in a rock. Later, the Lord tells him to go and find it. When Jeremiah does so, he discovers it has rotted away. It's ruined and of no use for anything.

The Lord uses the waistcloth as a symbol of the ruined faith of Judah and Jerusalem. In other words, the people Israel refused to listen to the Lord and worship him. Instead, they turned away to false gods and fell into the sin of idolatry.

We might think the sin of idolatry is something that would never happen to us. However, as the Church teaches in the Catechism, it remains a real temptation to our Christian faith. We might not literally worship false gods, as did Israel, but it is all too easy to relegate God to a position below things like power, pleasure, and wealth.

What status does God have in your life? What changes might you need to make in order to love him above all else for his own sake?

2. Our responsorial psalm from Deuteronomy picks up on the same theme we heard from the prophet Jeremiah, which is a people who have forgotten the Creator, the God who gave them life and sustains them by his love.

These are people who are “a deceitful brood, children with no loyalty in them.” They live as if God does not exist. As a result, God will hide his face from them and “exasperate them with a stupid nation.”

The lesson here is that sin leads to darkness of the intellect—it fosters stupidity and every kind of evil. It destroys our relationship with God. The solution, of course, is faith in Christ and complete dedication to him. Do we live virtuously in the love of God? Or, on the other hand, has sin enslaved us in darkness?

3. In our reading from John, Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, has died. Jesus tells Martha that her brother will raise again. She responds by saying that she knows he will rise on the last day.

In general, the Jews believed that when someone died they went down into the realm of the dead. At the end of time—on the last day—they will rise again.



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Jesus, however, uses Martha's words to clarify an essential point: Jesus is himself the resurrection. In other words, those who believe in him and live in him will never die. When we are united to Christ in faith, we have eternal life. Furthermore, our bodies will be raised from the dead and glorified on his return, on the last day.

This wonderful future is on your horizon, provided that you truly live in Christ! That's the promise of God. Do you look forward in hope to this future?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 30, 2024



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, July 30th, 2024

Reading 1, Jeremiah 14:17-22

17 'So say this word to them: May my eyes shed tears night and day, unceasingly, since the daughter of my people has sustained a fearsome wound, a crippling injury.

18 If I go into the countryside, there lie those killed by the sword; if I go into the city, I see people tortured with hunger; even prophets and priests roam the country at their wits' end.'

19 Have you rejected Judah altogether? Does your very soul revolt at Zion? Why have you struck us down without hope of cure? We were hoping for peace -- no good came of it! For the moment of cure -- nothing but terror!

20 Yahweh, we acknowledge our wickedness and our ancestors' guilt: we have indeed sinned against you.

21 For your name's sake do not reject us, do not dishonour the throne of your glory. Remember us; do not break your covenant with us.

22 Can any of the nations' Futile Ones make it rain? Can the heavens of their own accord give showers? Are you not the one, Yahweh our God? In you is our hope, since you make all these things.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 79:8, 9, 11, 13

8 Do not count against us the guilt of former generations, in your tenderness come quickly to meet us, for we are utterly weakened;

9 help us, God our Saviour, for the glory of your name; Yahweh, wipe away our sins, rescue us for the sake of your name.

11 May the groans of the captive reach you, by your great strength save those who are condemned to death!

13 And we, your people, the flock that you pasture, will thank you for ever, will recite your praises from age to age.



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Gospel, Matthew 13:35-43

35 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet: I will speak to you in parables, unfold what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.

36 Then, leaving the crowds, he went to the house; and his disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable about the darnel in the field.'

37 He said in reply, 'The sower of the good seed is the Son of man.

38 The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the Evil One;

39 the enemy who sowed it, the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels.

40 Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time.

41 The Son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of falling and all who do evil,

42 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

43 Then the upright will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Anyone who has ears should listen!



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Questions for Reflection for July 30, 2024

1. In our first reading we heard a portion of the 14th Chapter of the Prophet Jeremiah proclaimed. It is important to listen to this reading in its fuller context. Judah has turned from the Lord and is experiencing the consequences of their wrong choices. That is what sin is, a rejection of God, a misuse of freedom, making the wrong choices. One of the consequences is a great drought. But, even in the midst of such travail, the people do not turn and repent, they listen to false prophets who tell them they will not be consumed by all of this but be "assured peace".

The Lord sends the Prophet Jeremiah to denounce the false prophets. It is Jeremiah's words following this denunciation from which that this portion, our first reading at Holy Mass, is taken.

The line before our first verse is the Lord saying to Jeremiah " You shall say to them this wording" for in a response from them: And, in the last half of the reading the Prophet tells the people what the Lord is looking for in a response from them: "Yahweh, we acknowledge our wickedness and our ancestors' guilt: we have indeed sinned against you. For your name's sake do not reject us, do not dishonor the throne of your glory. Remember us; do not break your covenant with us. Can any of the nations' Futile Ones make it rain? Can the heavens of their own accord give showers? Are you not the one, Yahweh our God? In you is our hope since you make all these things."

There are still false prophets in the midst of Gods people, in our own day. Some who would tell us that the time of struggle which the Church - and the Nations - are undergoing is not as a result of a rejection of God and His Law and Loving plan. Some who would encourage us to seek a kind of separate peace and turn away from the true God to new forms of idolatry. We must not listen to them. Then, as now, we must repent and beg the Lords Mercy and intervention.

2. The words of David in our Responsorial Psalm, taken from Psalm 79 continue to teach us how to repent and find our way back: "Do not count against us the guilt of former generations, in your tenderness come quickly to meet us, for we are utterly weakened; help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name; Yahweh, wipe away our sins, rescue us for the sake of your name. May the groans of the captive reach you, by your great strength save those who are condemned to death! And we, your people, the flock that you pasture, will thank you for ever, will recite your praises from age to age."

We need to live our lives for the Lord, quick to repent when we sin, and always ready to praise.

3. In the Gospel passage for today's Mass, taken from the 13th chapter of St Matthew, Jesus has dismissed the crowd and is explaining the parable of the weeds in the field and the seed. We are his contemporary disciples. The images of seed which is sown in a field speaks to every one of us and



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the way we live our daily lives. St. Jose Maria Escriva reflected on this fact in a profound homily which he concluded with this hopeful insight:

"May Our Lord be able to use us so that, placed as we are at all the cross-roads of the world - and at the same time placed in God - we become salt, leaven and light. Yes, you are to be in God, to enlighten, to give flavor, to produce growth and new life. But don't forget that we are not the source of this light: we only reflect it." (St. Jose Maria Escriva, Friends of God, 250) We are both the soil and the seed in these agrarian parables.

The Living Word has been sown within us, so we must cultivate the ground of our hearts in order to be transformed by grace and more fully reflect the Image and Likeness of God. We are called to grow in holiness and reflect the risen life of Jesus Christ to a world waiting to be born again. Then we are the seed, placed in His Holy, blood-stained Hands, being spread into the world which He still loves so much that He sends His Son, through the Church, the Body of Christ, of which we are members. (John 3:16, 1 Cor. 12:27)

The world which was created through the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word of the Father, is now being re-created in and through the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. We are living seeds of His Kingdom being spread in the garden of the world.



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

July 31, 2024



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, July 31st, 2024

Reading 1, Jeremiah 15:10, 16-21

10 A disaster for me, mother, that you bore me to be a man of strife and dissension for the whole country. I neither lend nor borrow, yet all of them curse me.

16 When your words came, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy of my heart; for I was called by your Name, Yahweh, God Sabaoth.

17 I never sat in the company of scoffers amusing myself; with your hands on me I held myself aloof, since you had filled me with indignation.

18 Why is my suffering continual, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, for me you are a deceptive stream with uncertain waters!

19 To which Yahweh replied, 'If you repent, I shall restore you to plead before me. If you distinguish between the precious and the base, you shall be as my own mouth. They will come back to you, but you must not go back to them.'

20 As far as these people are concerned, I shall make you a fortified wall of bronze. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, because I am with you to save you and rescue you, Yahweh declares.

21 I shall rescue you from the clutches of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the violent.'

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 59:2-3, 4, 10-11, 17, 18

2 rescue me from evil-doers, from men of violence save me.

3 Look at them, lurking to ambush me, violent men are attacking me, for no fault, no sin of mine, Yahweh,

4 for no guilt, they come running to take up position. Wake up, stand by me and keep watch,

10 the God who loves me faithfully is coming to meet me, God will let me feast my eyes on those who lie in wait for me.

11 Do not annihilate them, or my people may forget; shake them in your power, bring them low, Lord, our shield.



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17 My strength, I will make music for you, for my stronghold is God, the God who loves me faithfully.

Gospel, Matthew 13:44-46

44 'The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

45 'Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls;

46 when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.



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Questions for Reflection for July 31, 2024

1. In our first reading we are again given the opportunity to hear from the great Hebrew Prophet Jeremiah. He was a Prophet called to correct Judah, on behalf of the Lord, during the Babylonian exile - to call the Lord's people turn away from idolatry and back to the true God. To help them understand that their exile was a consequence of their sin and an invitation to repentance. Jeremiah was also a messianic prophet called to proclaim the coming of a New Covenant. In today's selections from Chapter 15, Jeremiah is speaking to the Lord, and, in a sense, complaining about his calling. His was not an easy message to deliver. Nor was it often well received. The Lord listens, but then responds.

He says "'If you repent, I shall restore you to plead before me. If you distinguish between the precious and the base, you shall be as my own mouth. They will come back to you, but you must not go back to them. As far as these people are concerned, I shall make you a fortified wall of bronze. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, because I am with you to save you and rescue you, Yahweh declares. I shall rescue you from the clutches of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the violent.' Jeremiahs honest relationship with the Lord, as evident in this prayer, is a model for each one of us. The Lord knows our hearts. We need to be honest with Him in prayer. But the response from the Lord to Jeremiah is also instructive. We need to learn to listen to the Lord. He speaks as well. And, if we learn to listen, we have begun to really understand prayer as a conversation with God.

2. David the Psalmist also teaches us this lesson about prayer. He was intensely honest in his prayer. And he learned to listen. Today's Psalm is an example. He cries out to the Lord "rescue me from evil-doers, from men of violence save me. Look at them, lurking to ambush me, violent men are attacking me, for no fault, no sin of mine, Yahweh, for no guilt, they come running to take up position. Wake up, stand by me and keep watch" And the Lord responds.

Do we have conversations with the Lord? We can. We should. he waits for such a dialogue.

3. In the short text from Chapter 13 of the Gospel of St. Matthew, the gospel for Wednesday of the seventeenth week in ordinary time, Jesus is offering another parable about the Kingdom. Another translation for the word translated "kingdom" is reign. The reign of God. The reign, the rulership of the Lord in our life is a treasure more valuable than any human treasure. So valuable that we should sell all to obtain it. Today is also the memorial of St Martha. The celebrant priest usually chooses the Gospel from the 11th chapter of St Johns Gospel for the memorial of St Martha.

The Gospel for today's Liturgy, on the day on which we reflect on St. Martha, gives us another insight into this great woman of God, and why she is held up as an example, a saint, a holy one, to emulate.



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The different ways in which the two sisters, Martha, and Mary, responded to Jesus in another Gospel passage has given rise to much reflection during the history of the Church. Sometimes, it has led to a confusing separation between faith and action. Too many people draw a separation between prayer and action which can fail to understand the integrated Christian Way of Life. There is a little bit of Mary and Martha in all of us.

There is no doubt, Mary chose the better part, beginning with worship. But, responding to the needs of the Lord, is also a commendable response to His presence. But all action should flow out of relationship. And relationship with the Lord is formed in worship and prayer. In fact, the response of Martha to the death of her brother, and the way in which she professes her faith in the Lord and intercedes, results in a miracle, the raising of her dear brother from the dead!

Listen to the question the Lord poses to Martha: "Jesus said: I am the resurrection. Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.' Do we believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life? Do we live as though we do? We can. We should. The Lord wants us to do so.



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